A

REPLY

TO

Mr. *J. S.* his 3d APPENDIX,

Containing some

Animadversions

ON THE

BOOK

ENTITULED

A RATIONAL ACCOUNT of the

Grounds of

Protestant Religion.

By *Ed. Stillingfleet* D. D.

London, Printed for *Henry Mortlock* at the *Phœnix* in St. *Paul's* Church-yard, 1688.

UMI

AN APPENDIX TO THE Rule of Faith.

To his honoured Friend Dr. *Tillotſon.*

SIR,

§ 1. AS ſoon as I underſtood your intentions to anſwer Mr. *Serjeant*, I could not but rejoyce on his behalf, as well as on the truths and your own. For I have that real kindneſs for him, that I heartily wiſh him that reaſon and ſcience he pretends to; which I could not but deſpair of his attaining, unleſs he were undeceived in that monſtrous opinion he hath of himſelf and his undertakings. And I knew no perſon more fit than you, to let him underſtand the truth and himſelf together. In which, your performances have been ſo clear and ſatisfactory, that I hope

Mr. *Serjeant*, in ſtead of another Letter of directions to his Anſwerer, will write you one of thanks, for the reaſon and kindneſs you have ſhewed him throughout your Book. Unleſs it fares with you, as it hath done with ſome other *Adverſaries* of theirs, that their civility hath been interpreted as an argument of their uncertainty, and their own confidence cried up for a demonſtration. In which ſenſe onely I ſhall grant our *Proteſtant* Writers to build on uncertainties, and Mr. *White* and Mr. *Serjeant* to be the great *Demonſtrators* of this Age. If their own reaſon had been as *ſevere* as the *cenſures* at *Rome* againſt them, they had ſaved us the labour of any anſwer, and would have found out their own *ſophiſtry* without a confutation. But the leaſt thing we can imagine by their exceſſive confidence, is, that they are deceived themſelves; and therefore it is a part of charity to them, as well as juſtice to the truth, to let the world ſee, that big words are quite another thing from ſcience, and a ſtrong preſumption from a regular demonſtration. As to which, no more need to have been ſaid, than what you have already done, if Mr. *Serjeant* had not thought it an acceſſion to the glory of his atchievements, to lead two Pages of my Book in triumph after him. I confeſs, I was ſomewhat ſurprized to ſee a perſon who would be noted for his valour in aſſaulting *Proteſtant* Writers, ſteal

ſteal ſo behind the main bulk and deſign of my Book; and when he had gotten two ſingle Pages by themſelves, fall upon them with as much pomp and oſtentation, as if he had attack'd the whole. And this muſt be noiſed abroad as an *Anſwer* to me, by the ſame figure that his arguments are called demonſtrations, which is by an *hyperbole* unfit for any, but ſuch *who never flag below the ſphear of Science* in their own judgments; though they ſeem not to come near it in others. Yet ſince Mr. *Serjeant* is not onely pleaſed to concern himſelf ſo far as to anſwer that part of my Book relating to oral tradition; but in moſt expreſs terms to challenge me to reply to him, he may now ſee (aſſoon as I could get any liberty from greater imployments) how ready I am to give him all reaſonable ſatisfaction. And in the firſt place, I return him thanks for the weapon he hath made choice of, *viz.* that of *reaſon*; there being no other I deſire to make uſe of, in managing this debate between us: And I hope he will find as much civility towards him throughout this diſcourſe, as he expreſſes towards me in the entrance to his; if that may be accounted any real civility, which is intended merely out of deſign, with the greater advantage to diſparage the cauſe I have undertaken, and yet ſee no reaſon to repent of. *If in his curſory view of two Chapters of my Book he had* (as he ſaith) P. 230. P. 202.

quite loſt me, he had no cauſe to be troubled for it, if he had found far more excellent perſons, *ſuch as* Dr. *Hammond, and the Diſſuader, and* Dr. *Pierce, inſtead of me.* But to be ſure, he intends not this in honour to any of us, but by way of a common reproach to us all, as though *we did not talk out of nature or things, but words and imagination.* I could heartily have wiſhed, Mr. *S.* would have *crept ſo much of the victory due to anothers learning and induſtry*, as to have ſhewed me one propoſition in thoſe diſcourſes, *which a rational underſtanding, that would be true to it ſelf, could not ſettle or rely on.* But if ſuch inſinuations as theſe muſt paſs for anſwers, I muſt needs ſay, I judge Mr. *S.* equally happy in confuting our grounds, and in demonſtrating his own; in both which, his greateſt ſtrength lies in the *ſelf-evidence* of his bare affirmations. But it ſeems he is willing to reſign the glory of this *Victory* to the *judicious Authour* of *Labyrinthus Cantuarienſis*, or to ſome others for him; and when they have once obtained it, ſhall not envy them the honour of it. And I ſuppoſe thoſe perſons, whoever they are, may be able by this time, to tell Mr. *S.* it is an eaſier matter to talk of *Victories* than to get them. But if they do no more in the whole, than Mr. *S.* hath done for his ſhare, they will triumph no-where, but where they conquer, *viz.* in their own fancies and imaginations. Therefore

ſore leaving them to their ſilent conqueſts, and as yet, unheard-of Victories, we come to Mr. *S.* who ſo liberally proclaims his own in the point of oral tradition. *Which* (in a phraſe ſcarce heard of in our language before) *is the Poſt*, he tells us, *he hath taken upon him to explicate farther and defend*. What the *explicating a Poſt* means, I as little underſtand, as I do the force of his demonſtrations; but this, and many other ſuch uncouth forms of ſpeech, up and down in his Book (which make his ſtyle ſo ſmooth and eaſie,) are I ſuppoſe intended for embelliſhments of our tongue, and as helps to *ſure-ſpeaking*, as his whole Book is deſigned for *ſure-footing*.

§ 2. But letting him enjoy the pleaſure and felicity of his own expreſſions, I come to conſider the matter in debate between us. And his firſt controverſie with me, is, *for oppoſing the infallibility of oral tradition, to doctrinal infallibility in Pope and Councils.* P. 203. A controverſie fitter to be debated among themſelves, than between him and me: For is any thing more notorious, than that *infallibility* is by the far greateſt part of *Romaniſts* attributed to the preſent *Church*, in teaching and delivering matters of faith, not by virtue of any oral tradition, but the immediate aſſiſtance of the *Holy Ghoſt*; and that this is made by them the onely ground of divine faith? For which Mr. *S.* may if he pleaſe, con-

conſult his *judicious Authour* of *Labyrinthus Cantuarienſis*, or any other of their preſent Writers, except Mr. *White* and *himſelf*. He need not therefore have been to ſeek for the meaning of this doctrinal infallibility, as oppoſed to traditionary, if he had not either been ignorant of the opinion of their own Writers, or notoriouſly diſſembled it. For this infallibility is not attributed to the Rulers of the Church, merely as *Doctours* or *Scholars*, but as the repreſentative *Church*, whoſe office it is, to deliver all matters of faith by way of an infallible teſtimony to every age, and thereby to afford a ſufficient foundation for divine faith. But Mr. *S.* attributes no ſuch infallibility to the repreſentative Church, as teaching the reſt, but derives their infallibility from ſuch grounds as are common to all parts of the eſſential Church. Wherein he apparently oppoſes himſelf to the whole current of their own Authours, who reſolve all faith into the immediate aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt; without which, they aſſert, there could be no infallibility at all in tradition, or any thing elſe; and therefore theſe opinions are as oppoſite to each other as may be. For ſuch an infallibility is not attributed by them to the Teachers of the *Church*, merely *on ſome ſignal occaſions*, as Mr. *S.* ſeems to ſuppoſe, when they are to explain new matters of faith; but it is made by them to be as neceſſary

ceſſary as believing it ſelf, becauſe thereby the onely ſure foundation of faith is laid; and therefore it is very evident, they make it proper to the Church in all ages: Or elſe in ſome age of the Church men were deſtitute of ſufficient grounds of faith. For they by no means think it a ſufficient foundation for faith, that one age of the Church could not conſpire to deceive another; for this they will tell him, at moſt, is but a humane faith: but that Chriſt by his promiſe hath aſſured the Church, that there ſhall never be wanting in it the infallible aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, whereby they ſhall infallibly teach and deliver all matters of faith. And if this be not their opinion, let them ſpeak to the contrary, which if they do, I am ſure they muſt retract their moſt elaborate diſcourſes about the reſolution of faith, written by the greateſt Artiſts among them. Let Mr. *S.* then judge, *who it is that ſtumbles at the Threſhold*; but of this difference among them, more afterwards. By this it appears, it was not on any miſtake that I remained unſatisfied in the Queſtion I asked, *Whether am I bound to believe what the preſent Church delivers to be infallible?* To which Mr. *S.* anſwers, *I underſtand him not.* My reply ſhall be onely that of a great *Lawyers* in a like caſe, *I cannot help that.* I am ſure my words are intelligible enough; for I take *infallible* there as he takes it himſelf,

for

for *infallibly true*; although I deny not the word to be improperly uſed in reference to things; and that for the reaſon given by him, *becauſe fallibility and infallibility belong to the knowing power, or the perſons that have it, and not to the object.* But we are often put to the uſe of that word in a ſenſe we acknowledge improper merely in compliance with our Adverſaries, who otherwiſe are apt to charge us with having onely uncertainties and probabilities for our faith; if we do not uſe the term *infallible* as applied to the truth of the thing. I am content therefore wherever, in what I have writ, he meets that term ſo applied, that he take it onely in his own ſenſe, for that which is *certainly true*; for I mean no more by it. And in this ſenſe Mr. *S.* anſwers affirmatively, and gives this acount of it, *not onely becauſe the preſent Church cannot be deceived in what the Church of the former age believed, but becauſe the Church in no age could conſpire againſt her knowledge to deceive that age immediately following in matter of fact, evident in a manner to the whole world.* The Queſtion then is, whether this be a ſufficient account for me to believe that to be certainly true, or to be the doctrine of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, which the preſent Church delivers? and conſequently, whether the reſolution of faith be barely into oral tradition?

P. 204.

§ 3. Thus

§ 3. Thus we ſee the clear ſtate of the Queſtion between us. I come therefore to the vindication of thoſe things which I had objected againſt this way of reſolving faith into oral tradition. Three things I eſpecially inſiſted on: 1. That it is inconſiſtent with the pretenſions of the preſent *Roman* Church. 2. That it hath not been the way owned in all ages of the Chriſtian Church. 3. That it is repugnant to common ſenſe and experience, and that the Church of *Rome* hath apparently altered from what was the belief of former ages. If theſe three be made good, there will be no cauſe to *glory* in this laſt invention, to ſupport the ſinking fabrick of that Church. Theſe three then I undertake to defend againſt what Mr. *Serjeant* hath objected againſt them.

1. That it is contrary to the pretenſions of the preſent *Roman* Church. And if it be ſo, there can be no reaſon for thoſe who are of it, to rely upon it. For if ſo be that Church pretends, that the obligation to faith ariſes from a quite different ground from this; how can they who believe that Church infallible, venture their faith upon any other principle than what is publickly owned by her? And whoſoever thinks himſelf bound to believe by virtue of an infallible aſſiſtance of the preſent Church, doth thereby ſhew, that his obligation doth not depend upon what was delivered by the former ages of the

the Church. As thoſe who believed the Apoſtles were infallible in their doctrine, could not reſolve their faith into the infallibility of oral tradition, but into that immediate aſſiſtance by which the Apoſtles ſpake; and where there is a belief of a like aſſiſtance, the foundation of faith cannot lye in the indefectibility of tradition, but in that infallible Spirit which they ſuppoſe the Church to be aſſiſted by. For ſuppoſing this oral tradition ſhould fail, and that men might believe that it had actually failed; yet if the former ſuppoſition were true, there was ſufficient ground for faith remaining ſtill. And what aſſurance can any one have, that the preſent Church delivers nothing for matter of faith, but what hath been derived in every age from Chriſt and his Apoſtles, if ſuch an infallible Spirit be ſuppoſed in the preſent Church which was in the Apoſtles themſelves? For on the ſame reaſon that thoſe who heard the Apoſtles were not bound to trouble themſelves with the tradition of the former age; no more ought they who believe the preſent *Roman* Church to have the ſame infallible aſſiſtance. They need not then enquire, whether this age knew the meaning of the former, or whether one age could conſpire to deceive another, or whether notwithſtanding both theſe, errours might not come into the Church; it is ſufficient for them, that the definitions of

the

the preſent Church are infallible in all matters of faith. Therefore my demand was built on very good reaſon; *How can ye aſſure me the preſent Church obliges me to believe nothing but onely what, and ſo far as it received from the former Church?* And Mr. *S*'s anſwer is far from being ſatisfactory, *That this appears by her manifeſt practice, never refuſing communion to any man, that could approve himſelf to believe all the former age did.* For this may be reſolved into a principle far different from this, which is the belief of the infallibility of the preſent Church. For ſuppoſing, that they are not bound to enquire themſelves into the reaſons why the tradition could not fail in any age; it is ſufficient for them to believe the Church infallible; and if it be ſo, in propoſing matters of faith, it muſt be ſo in declaring what the belief of the former age was. But my demands go on, *What evidence can you bring to convince me both that the Church always obſerved this rule, and could never be deceived in it?* Which queſtion is built on theſe two Principles which the infallibility of oral tradition ſtands on: 1. That the Church muſt always go upon this ground. 2. That if it did ſo, it is impoſſible ſhe ſhould be deceived. Both which are ſo far from that *ſelf-evidence* which Mr. *Serjeant* ſtill pretends to in this way, that the *Jeſuits* principles ſeem much more rational and conſiſtent, than

than theſe do. For granting them but that one *Poſtulatum*, that there muſt be an inherent infallibility in the teſtimony of the preſent Church, to afford ſufficient foundation for divine Faith, all the reſt of their doctrine follows naturally from it. Whereas this new way of reſolving faith is built on ſuch ſuppoſitions, which no man well in his wits will be ready to grant. For unleſs it be *ſelf-evident* that the Church did always proceed on this ground, it cannot be *ſelf-evident* that oral tradition is infallible; becauſe the *ſelf-evidence* of this principle depends on this, that in all ages of the Church the onely rule and meaſure of faith, was what was delivered by oral tradition from the age foregoing. Now if it be poſſible, that matters of faith might be conveyed in ways quite different from this, what *ſelf-evidence* can there be, that the Church muſt always proceed upon this? Mr. *S.* then, muſt demonſtrate it impoſſible for matters of faith to be conveyed to poſterity in any other way than oral tradition; and not onely that the thing is impoſſible, but that the Church in all ages judged it to be ſo; or elſe he can never make it at all evident, that the Church always made this her rule of faith. But if either there may be a certain conveyance of the doctrine of faith another way, *viz.* by writing, or that the Church might judge that way more certain, whether it were ſo or

or not, either way it will appear far enough from *ſelf-evidence*, that ſhe always judged of doctrines of faith, merely by the tradition of the preceding age. If another way be granted poſſible, there muſt be cleat demonſtration, that the Church notwithſtanding this, did never make uſe of it; for if it did make uſe of another way of reſolving faith in any age of the Church, then in that age of the Church oral tradition was not looked on as the ground of faith; and if ſo, notwithſtanding whatever Mr. *S.* can demonſtrate to the contrary, that age might have believed otherwiſe than the immediately preceding did. For let us but ſuppoſe, that all neceſſary doctrines of faith were betimes recorded in the Church, in Books univerſally received by the Chriſtians of the firſt ages; is it not poſſible, that age which firſt embraced theſe Books, might deliver them to poſterity as the rule of their faith, and ſo down from one age to another; and doth it not hence follow, that the rule of faith is quite different from a mere oral tradition? Let Mr. *S.* then either ſhew it impoſſible, that the doctrines of faith ſhould be written; or that being written, they ſhould be univerſally received; or that being univerſally received in one age, they ſhould not be delivered to the next; or being delivered to the next, thoſe Books ſhould not be looked on as containing the rule of faith in them; or though they were ſo, yet,

that ſtill oral tradition was wholly relied on as the Rule of Faith; and then I ſhall freely grant that Mr. *S.* hath attempted ſomething towards the proof of this new *hypotheſis*. But as things now ſtand, it is ſo far from being *ſelf-evident*, that the Church hath always gone upon this principle, that we find it looked on as a great novelty among them in their own Church; and it would be a rare thing, for a new invention to have been the ſenſe of the Church in all Ages; which if it hath been, the ſtrength of it is thereby taken away.

§ 4. But let us ſuppoſe that the Church did proceed upon this principle, *that nothing was to be embraced, but what was derived by Tradition from the Apoſtles*; how doth it thence follow, that nothing could be admitted into the Church but what was really ſo derived from them? Do we not ſee in the world at this day, that among thoſe who own this principle, contradictory propoſitions are believed; and both ſides tell us, it is on this account, becauſe their doctrine was delivered by the *Apoſtles*? doth not the *Greek Church* profeſs to believe on the account of Tradition from the *Apoſtles* as well as the *Latin*? If that Tradition failed in the *Greek Church*, which was preſerved in the *Latin*, either Mr. *S.* muſt inſtance on his own principles in that Age which conſpired to deceive the next, or he muſt acknowledge, that while men own Tradition they may be deceived in what the fore-

foregoing Age taught them; and conſequently thoſe things may be admitted as doctrines coming from the *Apoſtles* which were not ſo, and ſome which did may be loſt, and yet the pretence of Tradition remain ſtill. What *ſelf-evidence* then can there be in this principle, when two parts of the Church may both own it, and yet believe contradictions on the account of it? It is then worth our enquiring, what *ſelf-evidence* this is which Mr. *S.* ſpeaks ſo much of, which is neither more nor leſs, *but that men in all Ages had Eyes, Ears, and other Senſes, alſo common reaſon, and as much memory as to remember their own names and frequently inculcated actions.* Which is ſo very reaſonable a *poſtulatum*, that I ſuppoſe none who enjoy any of theſe will deny it. Let us therefore ſee how he proceeds upon it. *If you diſprove this, I doubt we have loſt mankind, the ſubject we ſpeak of; and till you diſprove it, neither I, nor any man in his wits can doubt, that this rule depending on teſtifying, that is, ſenſe or experience, can poſſibly permit men to be deceivable.* Big words indeed; but ſuch as evidence that all men who are in their wits do not conſtantly uſe them. For I pray, Sir, what doth Mr. *S.* think of the *Greek Church*? Had not thoſe in it Eyes, Ears, and other Senſes, as well as in the *Latin*? Do not they pretend and appeal to what they received from their *Fore-fathers* as well as the *Latins*? It ſeems then a de- P. 205.

ception is poſſible in the caſe of teſtifying, and therefore this doth more *than permit men to be deceivable*; for there hath been an actual deception on one ſide or other. But we need not fear *loſing mankind in this*; for the poſſibility of error ſuppoſeth mankind to continue ſtill; and if we take away that, we may ſooner loſe it than by the contrary. But what repugnancy can we imagine to humane nature, that men ſuppoſing doctrines of faith to come down from *Chriſt* or his *Apoſtles*, ſhould yet miſtake in judging what thoſe doctrines are? Had not men Eyes, and Ears, and common Senſe in *Chriſt* and the *Apoſtles* times? And yet we ſee even then the doctrine of *Chriſt* was miſtaken; and is it ſuch a wonder it ſhould be in ſucceeding Ages? Did not the *Nazarenes* miſtake in point of Circumciſion, the *Corinthians* as to the Reſurrection, and yet the mean time agree in this, that *Chriſt*'s doctrine was the rule of faith, or that they ought to believe nothing but what came from him? Did not the Diſciples themſelves err, even while they were with Chriſt, *and certainly had Eyes, and Ears, and common Senſe as other men have*, concerning ſome great Articles of Chriſtian Faith, *viz. Chriſt's Paſſion, Reſurrection*, and the *nature of his Kingdom*? If then ſuch who had the greateſt opportunities imaginable, and the higheſt apprehenſions of *Chriſt*, might ſo eaſily miſtake in points of ſuch

ſuch moment, what ground have we to believe, that ſucceeding Ages ſhould not be liable to ſuch miſapprehenſions? And it was not merely the want of clear Divine Revelation which was the cauſe of their miſtakes; for theſe things were plain enough to perſons not poſſeſſed with Prejudices; but thoſe were ſo ſtrong as to make them apprehend things quite another way than they ought to do. So it was then, and ſo it was in ſucceeding Ages; for let Parents teach what they pleaſed for matters of Faith, yet prejudice and liableneſs to miſtake in Children, might eaſily make them miſapprehend either the nature or weight of the doctrines delivered to them. So that ſetting aſide a certain way of Recording the matters of Faith in the Books of *Scripture*, and theſe preſerved entire in every Age, it is an eaſie matter to conceive, how in a ſhort time *Chriſtian Religion* would have been corrupted as much as ever any was in the world. For when we conſider how much notwithſtanding *Scripture*, the Pride, Paſſion, and Intereſts of men have endeavoured to deface *Chriſtian Religion* in the world, what would not theſe have done, if there had been no ſuch certain rule to judge of it by? Mr. *S.* imagins himſelf *in repub. Platonis*, but it appears he is ſtill *in fæce Romuli*; he fanſies there never were, nor could be any differences among *Chriſtians*, and that all *Chriſtians* made it their whole buſineſs to teach their

poſterity matters of Faith, and that they minded nothing in the world but the imprinting that on their minds that they might have it ready for their Children; and that all Parents had equal skill and fidelity in delivering matters of *Religion* to their poſterity. Whereas in truth, we find in the early Ages of the *Chriſtian Church* ſeveral differences about matters of Faith, and theſe differences continued to poſterity, but all parties ſtill pleading that their doctrine came from the *Apoſtles*; and it fell out unhappily for Mr. *S.* that thoſe were commonly moſt groſly deceived who pretended the moſt to Oral Tradition from the *Apoſtles*; ſtill we find the grand debate was, what came from the *Apoſtles*, and what not? whereas had Tradition been ſo infallible a way of conveying, how could this ever have come into debate among them? What, did not they know what their Parents taught them? It ſeems they did not, or their Parents were no more agreed than themſelves; for their differences could never be ended this way. Afterwards came in for many Ages ſuch a ſucceſſion of Ignorance and Barbariſm, that *Chriſtian Religion* was little minded either by Parents or *Children*, as it ought to have been; inſtead of that, ſome fopperies and ſuperſtitions were hugely in requeſt, and the men who fomented theſe things were cried up as great *Saints* and workers of Miracles. So that the

Miracles

Miracles of S. *Francis* and S. *Dominick* were as much, if not more carefully conveyed from Parents to Children in that Age, than thoſe of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*; and on this account poſterity muſt be equally bound to believe them, and have their perſons in equal veneration. If men at laſt were grown wiſer, it was becauſe they did not believe Mr. *S's* principles, that they ought to receive what was delivered by their Parents; but they began to ſearch and enquire into the writings of former Ages, and to examine the opinions and practices of the preſent, with thoſe of the primitive Church, and by this means there came a reſtauration of *Learning* and *Religion* together.

§ 5. But though matters of fact be plain and evident in this caſe, yet Mr. *S.* will prove it impoſſible there ſhould any Errors come into the *Chriſtian Church*; and his main argument is this, *becauſe no Age of the Church could conſpire againſt her knowledge to deceive that Age immediately following, in matter of fact, evident in a manner to the whole world.* But before I come, more particularly, to ſhew the weakneſs of this argument, by manifeſting how Errors might come into the Church without ſuch a Conſpiracy as this is, I ſhall propound ſome *Queries* to him. 1. What Age of the *Church* he will inſtance in, wherein all perſons who were not caſt out of the *Church*, had the ſame apprehenſions concern-

ing all points of Faith *i. e.* that none among them did believe more things delivered by Chriſt or the *Apoſtles* than others did. I am ſure he can neither inſtance in the Age of the *Apoſtles* themſelves, nor in thoſe immediately ſucceeding them; unleſs Mr. *S.* the better to defend his *hypotheſis*, will queſtion all written Records, becauſe they conſiſt of *dead letters*, and *unſens'd characters*, and *wordiſh teſtimonies*. Never conſidering, that while he utters this, he writes himſelf; unleſs he imagins there is more of *Life*, *Senſe*, and *Certainty* in his *Books*, than in the *Scriptures* or any other writing whatſoever. 2. Where there were different apprehenſions in one Age of the Church, whether there muſt not be different Traditions in the next? For as he looks on all Parents as bound to teach their Children, ſo on Children as bound to believe what their Parents teach them. On which ſuppoſition different Traditions in the ſucceeding Age muſt needs follow, different apprehenſions in the precedent. 3. Whether perſons agreeing in the ſubſtance of doctrines may not differ in their apprehenſions of the neceſſity of them? As for inſtance, all may agree in the Article of Chriſt's deſcent into Hell, but yet may differ in the explication of it, and in the apprehenſion of the neceſſity of it in order to ſalvation. So that we muſt not only in Tradition about matters of Faith enquire, what was delivered, but under

der what notion it was delivered; whether as an allowable opinion, or a neceſſary point of Faith. But if ſeveral perſons, nay multitudes in the Church may have different notions as to the neceſſity of the ſame points, by what means ſhall we diſcern what was delivered as an opinion in the Church, and what as an Article of Faith? But Mr. *S.* throughout his diſcourſe takes it for granted, that there is the ſame neceſſity of believing and delivering all things which concern the Chriſtian doctrine; and ſtill ſuppoſes the ſame *ſacredneſs, concern, neceſſity*, in delivering all the points in controverſie between the *Romaniſts* and Us, as there was in thoſe main Articles of Faith, which they and we are agreed in. Which is ſo extravagant a ſuppoſition, that it is hard to conceive it ſhould ever enter into the head of a perſon pretending to reaſon; but as extravagant as it is, it is that without which his whole Fabrick falls to the ground. For ſuppoſe we ſhould grant him, that the infinite concerns which depend on the belief of the *Chriſtian doctrine* ſhould be of ſo prevalent nature with the world, that it is impoſſible to conceive any one Age ſhould neglect the knowing them, or conſpire to deceive the next Age about them; yet what is all this to the matters in difference between us? Will Mr. *S.* prove the ſame *ſacredneſs, neceſſity, concern, and miraculouſly atteſtedneſs* (as he phraſes it) in the *Invocation*

Invocation of Saints, Purgatory, Tranſubſtantiation, Supremacy, &c. as in the believing the Death and Reſurrection of the Son of God? If he doth not prove this, he doeth nothing; for his arguments may hold for doctrines judged univerſally neceſſary, but for no other. Therefore Mr. *S.* hath a new task which he thought not of; which is, to manifeſt that theſe could not be looked on as *Opinions*, but were embraced as *neceſſary Articles of Faith*. For unleſs he proves them ſuch, he can neither prove any obligation in Parents to teach them their *Children*, nor in *Children* to believe what their *Parents* taught, but only to hold them in the ſame degree which they did themſelves. When Mr. *S.* will undertake to prove, that the whole *Church*, from the time of Chriſt, did agree in the points in difference between us, as neceſſary Articles of Faith, I may more eaſily believe, that no Age could be ignorant of them, or offer to deceive the next about them. But when Mr. *S.* reflects on his frequent conceſſion, that there are *private Opinions* in the *Church*, diſtinct from *matters of Faith*, he muſt remember, before he can bring home his grounds to the caſe between their *Church* and ours, that he muſt prove none of the things in debate, were ever entertained as *private Opinions*, and that it is impoſſible for that which was a *private Opinion* in one Age, to become a *matter* of *Faith* in the next. § 6.

§ 6. But becauſe this diſtinction of his ruins his whole demonſtration, I ſhall firſt propound it in his own terms, and then ſhew how from thence it follows, that Errors may come into the *Church*, and be entertained as matters of Faith. His words are, *It being evident, that we have but two ways of ordinary knowledge, by acts of our Soul, or operations on our Body, that is, by reaſon and experience; the former of which belongs to Speculators or Doctors, the ſecond to Deliverers of what was received, or Teſtifiers.* And this diſtinction he frequently admits, not only in the preſent Age of the Church, but in any; for the ſame reaſon will hold in all. From hence I propoſe ſeveral *Queries* farther to Mr. *S.* 1. If every one in the *Church* looked on himſelf as bound to believe juſt as the precedent Age did, whence came any to have *particular Opinions* of their own? For either the *Church* had delivered her ſenſe in that caſe or not; if not, then Tradition is no certain conveyer of the *doctrine* of *Chriſt*; if ſhe had, then thoſe who vented private ſpeculations were *Hereticks* in ſo doing; becauſe they oppoſed that doctrine which the *Church* received from *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*. If Mr. *S.* replies, *that private ſpeculations are inſuch caſes where there is no matter of Faith at all*, he can never be able to help himſelf by that diſtinction in the caſe of his own *Church*; for I demand, whether is it a *matter*

ter of *Faith*, that men ought to believe Oral Tradition infallible? If not, how can men ground their Faith upon it? If it be, then either ſome are mere *ſpeculators* in matters of Faith; or all who believe on the account of the *Popes infallibility* are *Hereticks* for ſo doing. 2. If there were *ſpeculators* in former Ages as well as this, whether did thoſe men believe their own *ſpeculations* or no? If not, then the *Fathers* were great *Impoſtors*, who vented thoſe *ſpeculations* in the *Church* which they did not believe themſelves. And it is plain, Mr. *S.* ſpeaks of ſuch Opinions which the aſſerters of, do firmly believe to be true: And if they did, then they look on themſelves as bound to believe ſomething which was not founded on the Tradition of the *Church*; and conſequently, did not own *Oral Tradition*, as the *Rule* of *Faith*. So that as many *ſpeculators* as we find in the *Church*, ſo many *teſtifiers* we have againſt the *infallibility* of *Oral Tradition*. 3. Whether thoſe perſons who did themſelves believe thoſe Opinions to be true, did not think themſelves obliged to tell others they ought to believe them; and conſequently, to deliver theſe as matters of Faith to their Children? Let Mr. *S.* ſhew me any inconſequence in this; but that it unavoidably follows upon his principles, that they were bound to teach their Children what themſelves received as the doctrine of Chriſt; and that the obligation is in all reſpects equal as if they had believed

theſe

theſe things on the account of *Oral Tradition*. 4. If Children be obliged to believe what their Parents teach them for matters of Faith, then upon Mr. *S*'s own conceſſions, is not poſterity bound to believe ſomething which originally came not from *Chriſt* or his *Apoſtles*? For it appears in this caſe, that the firſt riſe was from a private Opinion of ſome *Doctors* of the *Church*; but they believing theſe Opinions themſelves, think themſelves obliged to propagate them to others; and by reaſon of their Learning and Authority, theſe Opinions may by degrees gain a general acceptance in the ruling part of the *Church*; and all who believe them true, think they ought to teach them their *Children*; and Children they are to believe what their Parents teach them. Thus from Mr. *S*'s *own principles*, things that never were delivered by *Chriſt* or his *Apoſtles*, may come to be received as matters of Faith in the preſent *Church*. Thus the intelligent Reader needs no bodies help but Mr. *S*. to let him underſtand how *Invocation of Saints*, *Purgatory*, *Tranſubſtantiation*, *&c.* though never delivered either by *Chriſt* or his *Apoſtles*, may yet now be looked on as Articles of *Faith*, and yet no Age of the *Church* conſpire to deceive another. Either then Mr. *S*. muſt ſay, there never were any *private Opinators* or *Speculators* in the *Church*, as diſtinct from *teſtifiers*, and then he unavoidably contradicts himſelf; or he muſt deny that poſterity is bound

bound to believe what their fore-fathers delivered them as matters of Faith; which deſtroys the force of his whole demonſtration. Perhaps he will anſwer, *that Children are not bound to believe what barely their Parents, or any other number of perſons might deliver as matters of Faith, but what the whole Church of every Age delivers.* This, though the only thing to be ſaid in the caſe, yet is moſt unreaſonable, becauſe it runs men upon inextricable difficulties in the way of their reſolving Faith. For ſuppoſe any Children taught by their Parents what they are to believe; Mr. *S.* muſt ſay, they are not bound to believe them preſently, but to enquire whether they agree with the whole *Church* of that *Age* firſt, before they can be obliged to aſſent. Which being an impoſſible task either for Children, or men of Age, to find out in the way of Oral Tradition, this way of reſolving Faith, doth but offer a fairer pretence for infidelity. For we ſee, how impoſſible it is for Mr. *S.* to make it appear, that their *Church* is agreed about the Rule of Faith; for by his own confeſſion, the far greater number as *Speculators* oppoſe the way aſſerted by him; how much more difficult then muſt it needs be, to find out what the ſenſe of the whole *eſſential Church* is in all matters which Parents may teach their Children for doctrines of Faith? So that if Children are not bound to believe what their Parents teach them, till they

they know they teach nothing but what the whole *Church* teaches, it is the moſt compendious way to teach them they are not bound to believe at all. But if this diſtinction be admitted, as Mr. *S.* makes much uſe of it, then it appears, how errors may come into the Church at firſt under the notion of *ſpeculations*, and by degrees to be delivered as points of *faith*, by which means thoſe things may be received in the *Church*, for ſuch, which were never delivered by *Chriſt* or his *Apoſtles*, and yet no age conſpire to deceive the next, which was the thing to be ſhewed.

§ 7. This is one way of ſhewing how *errors* may come into the *Church*, without one ages conſpiring to deceive the next; but beſides this, there are ſeveral others I might inſiſt upon; but I ſhall mention onely two more: 1. Miſinterpreting the ſenſe of *Scripture*. 2. Suppoſing it in the power of ſome part of the *Church* to oblige the whole in matters of faith. For the *firſt* we are to conſider, that no imaginable account can be *given* either of the writing or univerſal reception of the *Books* of the *New Teſtament*, if they were not deſigned for the preſervation of the doctrine of *Chriſt*. And although it ſhould be granted poſſible for the main and fundamental articles of Chriſtian faith (ſuch as the *Apoſtles Creed* gives a ſummary account of) to have been preſerved by the help

help of tradition; yet, unleſs we be extremely ungratefull, we cannot but acknowledge, that *God* hath infinitely better provided for us, in not leaving the grounds of our *Religion* to the mere *breath* of the people, or the care of Mothers inſtructing their *Children* but hath given us the certain records of all the doctrines and motives of faith, preſerved inviolably from the firſt ages of the *Church*. And when the *Church* ſaw with what care *God* had provided for the means of faith, *oral tradition* was little minded; thence the memory of thoſe other things not recorded in *Scripture* is wholly loſt; all the care was imployed in ſearching, preſerving, and delivering theſe *ſacred Books* to poſterity. To theſe the primitive *Church* ſtill appeals; theſe they plead for againſt all adverſaries, defending their authority, explaining their ſenſe, vindicating them from all corruptions. Tradition they rely not on, any farther than as a teſtimony of the truth of theſe records, or to clear the ſenſe of them from the perverſe interpretation of thoſe *Hereticks* who pretended another kind of tradition than what was in *Scripture*. And when theſe were ſilenced, all the diſputes that aroſe in the *Church* concerning matters of faith, were about the ſenſe of theſe Books; as is evident by the proceedings in the caſe of *Arius* and *Pelagius*. Wherein tradition was onely uſed as a means to clear the ſenſe of the *Scriptures*,

but

but not at all as that which the faith of all was to be reſolved into. But when any thing was pleaded from tradition, for which there was no ground in *Scripture*, it was rejected with the ſame eaſe it was offered; and ſuch perſons were plainly told, this was not the *Churches* way; if they had plain Scripture with the concurrent ſenſe of *Antiquity*, they might produce it, and rely upon it. So that the whole uſe of *tradition* in the primitive *Church* (beſides atteſting the Books) was, to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of impoſing ſenſes on *Scripture*, againſt the univerſal ſenſe of the *Church* from the *Apoſtles* times. But as long as men were men, it was not avoidable, but they muſt fall into different apprehenſions of the meaning of the *Scripture*, according to their different judgments, prejudices, learning and education. And ſince they had all this apprehenſion, that the *Scripture* contained all doctrines of faith, thence as men judged of the ſenſe of it, they differed in their apprehenſion, concerning matters of faith. And thence errours and miſtakes might eaſily come into the *Church*, without one age conſpiring to deceive the next. Nay, if it be poſſible for men to rely on tradition without *Scripture*, this may eaſily be done; for by that means they make a new rule of faith, not known to the primitive *Church*, and conſequently, that very aſſertion is an errour in which the former age did not con-

ſpire to deceive the next. And if theſe things be poſſible, Mr. *S*'s demonſtration fails him; for hereby a reaſonable account is given, how errours may come into a *Church* without one age conſpiring to deceive another. Again, let me enquire of Mr. *S.* whether men may not believe it in the power of the ruling part of the *Church*, to oblige the whole to an aſſent to the definitions of it? To ſpeak plainer, is it not poſſible for men to believe the *Pope* and *Council infallible* in their *decrees*? And I hope the *Jeſuits* (as little as Mr. *S.* loves them, or they him) may be a ſufficient evidence of more than the bare poſſibility of this. If they may believe this, doth it not neceſſarily follow, that they are bound to believe whatever they declare to be matter of faith? Suppoſing then, that *Tranſubſtantiation*, *Supremacy*, *Invocation* of *Saints* were but *private opinions* before, but are now defined by *Pope* and *Council*, theſe men cannot but look on themſelves as much obliged to believe them, as if they had been delivered as matters of faith, in every age ſince the *Apoſtles* times. Is it now repugnant to common ſenſe that this opinion ſhould be believed or entertained in the *Church*? if not, why may not this opinion be generally received? if it be ſo, doth it not unavoidably follow, that the faith of men muſt alter according to the *Churches* definitions? And thus *private opinions* may be believed as *articles* of

faith

faith, and *corrupt practices* be eſtabliſhed as *laudable pieces of devotion*, and yet no one age of the *Church* conſpire to deceive another. Thus I hope Mr. *S.* may ſee how far it is from being a *ſelf-evident principle, that no errour can come into the Church, unleſs one age conſpire to deceive the next in a matter of fact, evident in a manner to the whole world.* Which is ſo wild an apprehenſion, that I believe the *Jeſuits* cannot entertain themſelves without ſmiles, to ſee their *domeſtick adverſaries* expoſe themſelves to contempt with ſo much confidence.

§ 8. Thus I come to the reaſon I gave, why there is no reaſon to believe that this is the preſent ſenſe of the *Roman Church*. My words are, *For I ſee the Roman Church aſſerts, that things may be* de fide *in one age, which were not in another; at leaſt Popes and Councils challenge this; and this is the common doctrine maintained there, and others are looked on as no members of their Church who aſſert the contrary; but as perſons at leaſt meritoriouſly, if not actually excommunicate. Where then ſhall I ſatisfie my ſelf, what the ſenſe of your Church is, as to this particular? Muſt I believe a very few perſons, whom the reſt diſown as heretical and ſeditious? or ought I not rather to take the judgment of the greateſt and moſt approved perſons of that Church? And theſe diſown any ſuch doctrine; but aſſert that the Church may determine things* de fide,

which were not before. In anſwer to this
P. 205. Mr. *S. begs leave to diſtinguiſh the words* de fide, *which may either mean Chriſtian faith, or points of faith taught by Chriſt; and then he grants, 'tis nonſenſe to ſay, they can be in one age, and not in another. Or* de fide *may mean obligatory to be believed. In this latter ſenſe none I think* (ſaith he) *denies things to be* de fide *in one age and not in another; in the former ſenſe none hold it.* Upon which very triumphantly he concludes, *What's now become of your difficulty? I believe you are in ſome wonderment, and think I elude it rather than anſwer it; I ſhall endeavour to unperplex you.* I muſt confeſs it a fault of humane nature, to admire things which men underſtand not; on which account I cannot free my ſelf from ſome temptation to that he calls *wonderment*; but I am preſently cured of it, when I endeavour to reduce his diſtinction to reaſon. For inſtead of explaining his terms, he ſhould have ſhewed how any thing can be obligatory to be believed in any age of the *Church*, which was no point of faith taught by *Chriſt*, which notwithſtanding his endeavour to *unperplex me*, is a thing as yet I apprehend not; becauſe I underſtand no obligation to faith to ariſe from any thing but *divine revelation*; and I do not yet believe any thing in *Chriſtian doctrine* to be divinely revealed, but what was delivered by *Chriſt* or his *Apoſtles*. And my

my *wonderment* muſt needs be the greater; becauſe I ſuppoſe this inconſiſtent with Mr. *S*'s principles. For oral tradition doth neceſſarily imply, that all points of *faith* were firſt taught by *Chriſt*, and conveyed by tradition to us; but if a thing may be *de fide* in this latter ſenſe, which was not before, what becomes of reſolving faith wholly into *oral tradition*? For *faith* is *reſolved* into that from whence the *obligation* to *believe* comes; but here Mr. *S*. confeſſes, that the obligation to believe doth ariſe from ſomething quite different from *oral tradition*; and therefore faith muſt be reſolved into it. Beſides, all the ſenſe I can find in that diſtinction, is, that men are bound to believe ſomething in one age, which they were not in another; and if ſo, I ſhall deſire Mr. *S*. to *unperplex me* in this, how every age is bound to believe juſt as the precedent did, and yet one age be bound to believe more than the precedent. But however, I am much obliged to him for his endeavour to *unperplex me*, as he ſpeaks; for really I look on no civilities to be greater than thoſe which are deſigned for clearing our underſtandings; ſo great an adorer am I of true reaſon and an intelligible Religion. And therefore I perfectly agree with him in his ſaying, *that Chriſtianity aims not to make us beaſts, but more perfectly men; and the perfection of our manhood conſiſts in the uſe of our reaſons*. From whence P. 206.

he infers, that it is reaſonable, conſequences ſhould be drawn from principles of faith, *which*, he ſaith, *are of two ſorts*; *firſt ſuch as need no more but common ſenſe to deduce them*; *the others are ſuch as need the maxims of ſome ſcience got by ſpeculation to infer them*; *and theſe are Theological concluſions: The former ſort*, he tells us, *the Church is neceſſitated to make uſe of upon occaſion*, i. e. *when any Heretick queſtions thoſe*, *and* eadem opera, *the whole point of faith it ſelf*, *of which they were a part*; *as in the caſe of the* Monothelites, *about Chriſt's having two wills.* But all this while, I am far enough from being *unperplexed*; nay by this diſcourſe, I ſee every one who offers to *unperplex* another, is not very *clear* himſelf. For ſince he makes no *Theological concluſions* to be *de fide*, but onely ſuch *conſequences as common ſenſe draws*, I would willingly underſtand how *common ſenſe* receives a new obligation to faith. For to my apprehenſion the deducing of conſequences from principles by *common ſenſe*, is not an act of believing, but of knowledge conſequent upon a principle of faith. And the meaning is no more than this, that men, when they ſay they believe things, ſhould not contradict themſelves, as certainly they would do, if they deny thoſe *conſequences* which *common ſenſe* draws from them. As in the caſe of the *Monothelites*, for men to aſſert that

Chriſt

Chriſt had *two natures*, and yet not *two wills*; when the *will* is nothing elſe but the inclination of the *nature* to that *good* which belongs to it. So that there can be no diſtinct obligation to believe ſuch *conſequences* as are drawn by common ſenſe; but every one that believes the *principles* from whence they are drawn, is thereby bound to believe all the conſequences which immediately follow from them. Indeed the *Church*, when people will be ſo unreaſonable to deny ſuch things, may explain her ſenſe of the article of faith in thoſe terms which may beſt prevent diſpute; but this is onely to diſcriminate the perſons who truely believe this article, from ſuch as do not. Not that any new obligation to faith reſults from this act of the *Church*; but the better to prevent cavils, ſhe explains her ſenſe of the article it ſelf in more explicite terms. *Which*, as he ſaith, *is onely to put the faith out of danger of being equivocated*. Which is quite another thing from cauſing a new obligation to believe. As ſuppoſe the *Church*, to prevent the growth of the *Socinian doctrine*, ſhould require from men the declaring their belief of the *eternal exiſtence* of the *Son* of *God*; Would this be to bind men to believe ſome thing which they were not bound to before? No, but onely to expreſs their aſſent to the *Deity* of Chriſt in the ſimpleſt terms; becauſe otherwiſe they might call

him *God* by *office*, and not by *nature*. Now how can any one conceive, that any ſhould be firſt obliged to believe, that *Chriſt* is *God*, and yet receive a new obligation afterwards to believe his *eternal exiſtence*? Thus it is in all *immediate conſequences* drawn by *common ſenſe*; in all which, the primary obligation to believe the thing it ſelf, extends to the belief of it in the moſt clear and leaſt controverted terms, which are not intended to impoſe on mens faith, but to promote the *Churches* peace. For neither is there a new object of faith; for how can that be, which common ſenſe draws from what is believed already? neither is there any *infallible proponent*, unleſs *common ſenſe* hath uſurped the *Popes* prerogative. But Mr. *S.* offers at a reaſon for this, which is, *that none can have an obligation to believe what they have not an obligation to think of; aud in ſome age the generality of the faithfull have no occaſion, nor conſequently obligation to mind, reflect, or think on thoſe propoſitions involved in the main ſtock of faith. From whence*, he ſaith, *it follows, that a thing may be* de fide, *or obligatory to be believed in one age, and not in another.* But let Mr. *S.* ſhew, how a man can be obliged to believe any thing as an article of faith, who is not bound to think of all the immediate conſequences of it? Becauſe faith is an act of a reaſonable nature, which ought to enquire into the reaſons and

and conſequences of things which it doth believe. But Mr. *S*'s miſtake lies here, in not diſtinguiſhing the obligation to believe from the obligation to an explicite declaration of that aſſent. The former comes onely from God, and no new obligation can ariſe from any act of the *Church*; but the latter being a thing tending to the *Churches* peace, may be required by it on ſome occaſions; *i. e.* when the doctrine is aſſaulted by *Hereticks*, as in the time of the *four firſt General Councils*; but ſtill a man is not at all the more obliged to aſſent, but to expreſs his aſſent in order to the *Churches* ſatisfaction.

§ 9. But Mr. *S.* ſuppoſes me to enquire, *how the Church can have power to oblige the generality to belief of ſuch a point.* To which his anſwer is, *ſhe obliges them to believe the main point of faith, by virtue of traditions, being a ſelf-evident rule, and theſe implied points by virtue of their being ſelf-evidently connected with thoſe main and perpetually uſed points, ſo that the vulgar can be rationally and connaturally made capable of this their obligation.* But we are not now enquiring, what the obligation to believe the main points of faith is, nor whether tradition be a *ſelf-evident rule*; but how there ſhould be *a new obligation to believe ſomething ſelf-evidently connected with the former points*, is beyond my capacity to underſtand. And they muſt be *vulgar underſtandings* indeed, that P. 208.

that can *rationally and connaturally* be made capable of ſuch an obligation. For if it be ſelf evidently connected with the main points, no one can believe the one, without believing the other; for nothing is *ſelf-evident*, but what a man aſſents to at the firſt apprehenſion of it; and if he doth ſo, how comes there a new obligation to believe it? Is it poſſible to believe, that any thing conſiſts of *parts*, and not believe that *that whole is greater than any of thoſe parts*? for this is a thing *ſelf-evidently connected* with the nature of the *whole*. But theſe are *ſelf-evident riddles*, as the former were *unintelligible demonſtrations*. And yet, though theſe be rare *Theories*, the application of them to the caſe of the *Roman Church* exceeds all the reſt. *Whence*, ſaith he, *the Government of our Church is ſtill juſtified to be ſweet, and according to right nature, and yet forcible and efficacious*. Although I admire many things in Mr. *S*'s Book, yet I cannot ſay I do any thing more than this paſſage, that *becauſe men are obliged to believe no implied point, but ſuch as are ſelf-evidently connected with the main ones*, therefore *the Government of the Roman Church is ſweet, and according to right nature*, &c. Alas then, how much have we been miſtaken all this while, that have charged her with impoſing hard and unſufferable conditions of communion with her! No, the is

ſo

ſo gentle and ſweet, that ſhe requires nothing *but the main points on the account of a ſelf-evident rule, and implied points by reaſon of ſelf-evident connexion with the former.* I ſee Mr. *S.* (if he will make good his word) is the onely perſon who is ever like to reconcile me with the *Church* of *Rome*: For I aſſure you, I never deſire any better terms of communion with a *Church*, than to have no main points of faith required from me to aſſent to, but what are built on a *ſelf-evident rule*, nor any implied points but ſuch as are *ſelf evidently connected* with the former. And no work can be more eaſie, than to convince me upon theſe grounds; for all endeavours of proof are taken away by the things being ſaid to be *ſelf-evident*. For the very offer of proof that they are ſo, *ſelf-evidently* proves they are not ſo: For what ever is proved by ſome thing beſide it ſelf, can never be ſaid without a contradiction to be *ſelf-evident*. But not to tye up Mr. *S.* from his excellent faculty of proving, if Mr. *S.* will prove to me that any of the points in difference between us, as *Tranſubſtantiation*, *Purgatory*, *Supremacy* of the *Roman Church*, &c. have any *ſelf-evident connexion* with any main point of faith in the *Apoſtles Creed*, I ſolemnly promiſe him to retract all I have writ againſt that *Church*; ſo far ſhall I be from needing a new obligation to believe them. But if theſe be ſo remote

remote from *ſelf-evidence*, that they are plainly repugnant to ſenſe and reaſon (witneſs that ſelf-evident doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation) what then muſt we think of Mr. *S.*? Surely the leaſt is, that ſince his being a *Roman Catholick*, his mind is ſtrangely inlightned, ſo far that thoſe things are *ſelf-evident* to him, which are contradictions to the reſt of the world. But withall Mr. *S.* acquaints us with another Myſtery; which is, *how theſe points deſcended by a kind of Tradition*, and yet confeſſes, *they were never thought of or reflected on by the generality, till the Church took occaſion to explain them.* Such a *ſilent Tradition* doth very ſuitably follow the former *ſelf-evident connexion.* For he that can believe *Tranſubſtantiation* to be *ſelf-evident*, no wonder if he believes that to have been delivered by a *conſtant Tradition*, which was never heard of from the *Apoſtles times* to *theſe.*

Now Mr. *S.* is pleaſed to return to me, and draws up a freſh charge againſt me, which is, *that I act like a Politician, and would conquer them by firſt dividing them, and making odious compariſons between two parties of Divines. But to ſhew us how little they differ, he diſtinguiſhes them, as faithfull, and as private diſcourſers; in the former notion,* he ſaith, *they all hold the ſame divinely conſtituted Church-Government, and the ſame ſelf-evident Rule of Faith; but as private diſcourſers he acknow-*

acknowledges they differ in the explication of their belief. I meddle not here with the *Government* of their *Church*, (which I have elſewhere proved to be far enough from being *divinely conſtituted*) but with the *Rule of Faith*; and the queſtion is, whether the *infallibility* of *Oral Tradition*, be that *ſelf-evident Rule* which that *Church* proceeds on; *Yes*, ſaith Mr. *S. they are all as faithfull agreed in it, but as diſcourſes they differ* about it. Which in ſhort is, that all in the *Church* of *Rome*, who are not of his Opinion, know not what they ſay; and that they oppoſe that which they do really believe. Which in plain *Engliſh* is, that they are egregious diſſemblers and prevaricators in *Religion*, that they do intolerably flatter the *Pope* and *preſent Church* with loud declamations for their infallibility, but they do really believe no ſuch thing, but reſolve all into Oral Tradition. But is not this an excellent agreement among them, when Mr. *White* and his party not only diſown the common doctrine of the infallibility of *Pope* and *Councils*, but diſpute againſt it as pernicious and deſtructive to *Chriſtian Faith*? on the other ſide the far greater part of *Romaniſts* ſay, there can be no certainty of Faith, unleſs there be an *infallible* Divine Teſtimony in the *preſent Church*, and this lodged in *Pope* and *Councils*; that thoſe who endeavour to overthrow this, are *Dangerous*, *Seditious*, *Heretical* perſons. Accordingly their

their Books are cenſured at *Rome*, their Opinions diſputed againſt, and their Perſons condemned. And yet all this while, we muſt believe that *theſe* ſtick together like two ſmooth Marbles *as faithfull*, though they are knocked one againſt another *as diſcourſers*; and that they perfectly agree in the ſame *ſelf-evident Rule* of *Faith*, when all their quarrels and contentions are about it; and thoſe managed with ſo great heat, that *hereſie* is charged of one ſide, and *Arch-hereſie* and *undermining Religion* on the other. Doth he think we never heard of Mr. *White*'s *Sonus Succinæ*, nor of that *Chapter* in it, where he ſaith, *that the doctrine of Pope and Councils infallibility tends to overthrow the certainty of Chriſtian Faith; and that the propagating ſuch a doctrine is a greater crime than burning Temples, Raviſhing the Sacred Virgins on the Altars, trampling on the body of Chriſt, or the ſending the Turk or Antichriſt into Chriſtian Countreys?* Or doth he think we can believe that the *Pope* and *Cardinals*, the *Jeſuits* and all the *Papiſts* of foreign Countreys do *as faithfull* agree with Mr. *White* in this? It ſeems not ſo by the proceedings in the *Court* of *Rome* againſt him, in which as appears by the cenſure of the *Inquiſition* againſt him, dated the 17*th* of *November* 1661. his doctrine is condemned not only as *Falſe*, *Seditious* and *Scandalous*, but as *Heretical* and *Erroneous* in *Faith*. And if it were not for this

this very doctrine he was there cenſured, why doth Mr. *White* ſet himſelf purpoſely to defend it in his *Tabulæ ſuffragiales*? If theſe then do agree *as faithfull*, who cannot but envy the excellent harmony of the *Roman Church*, in which men condemn each other for *Hereticks*, and yet all believe the ſame things ſtill? Well, Sir, I am in hopes upon the ſame grounds Mr. *S.* will yield us the ſame charity too, and tell us that we agree with him *as faithfull*, only we differ a little from him as *diſcourſers*; for I aſſure you, there is as great reaſon: the only difference is, we give them not ſuch *ill words* as they do each other. For let Mr. *S.* ſhew us wherein we differ more from him about the *Rule* of *Faith*, than they do among themſelves: For Mr. *White* when he hath ſaid, *that all kind of Hereſie doth ariſe from hence, that men make the Holy Scripture, or a private ſpirit, the Rule of Faith*; he preſently adds, *it is all one, if one make Councils or Pope any other way than as witneſſes to be the Authors of Faith. For*, ſaith he, *this is to ſubject the whole Church to that ſlavery, to receive any Errour for an Article of Faith, which they ſhall define, or propoſe* modo illegitimo, i. e. *any other way than as witneſſes of Tradition.* Either then we differ from Mr. *S.* only *as diſcourſers*, or he and his Brethren differ from each other more than as ſuch. And ſo any one would think who reads the oppoſitions and

and arguments againſt each other on this ſubject, particularly Mr. *Whites Tabulæ ſuffragiales*. But let Mr. *White* ſay what he will Mr. *S.* tells me, *I am not aware how little they differ even as Divines.* The more ſhame for them to have ſuch furious heats and oppoſitions where there is ſo little difference. But as little as they differ, Mr. *White* thinks it ſafer to talk of their unity in *England*, than to try whether they be of his mind at *Rome*, by going thither to clear himſelf; for he juſtly fears he ſhould find them differ from him ſome other way than *as bare diſcourſers*. Yet let us hear Mr. *S*'s reaſon; *for*, ſaith he, *though ſome ſpeculators attribute to the Church a power of defining things not held before, yet few will ſay ſhe hath new Revelations or new Articles of Faith.* But we know the temper of theſe men better than to rely on what they barely ſay. For they ſay what they think is moſt for their purpoſe; and one of Mr. *White*'s Adverſaries, (if himſelf may be credited) plainly told him, *if the doctrine of the Popes infallibility were not true, yet it ought to be defended becauſe it was for the intereſt of the Church of* Rome: for which he is ſufficiently rebuked by him. It is one thing then what they ſay, and another what neceſſarily follows from the Doctrine which they aſſert. But for plain dealing commend me to the *Canoniſts*, who ſay expreſly, the *Church* (by which they mean the

the *Pope*) may make *new Articles of Faith*: and this is the ſenſe of the reſt, though they are loth to ſpeak out. Elſe Mr. *White* was much to blame in ſpending ſo much time in proving the contrary. But what man of common ſenſe can imagine that theſe men can mean otherwiſe, who aſſert ſuch an infallibility in *Pope* and *Councils*, as to oblige men under pain of eternal Damnation to believe thoſe things which they were not obliged to, before ſuch a definition? And what can this be elſe but to make new Articles of Faith? For an Article of Faith ſuppoſes a neceſſary obligation to believe it: now if ſome doctrine may become thus obligatory by virtue of the *Churches* definition which was not ſo before, that becomes thereby an Article of Faith which it was not before. But theſe ſubtile men have not yet learnt to diſtinguiſh a *new Article of Faith*: they do not indeed pretend that their doctrine is new, becauſe they deny any ſuch thing as new Revelation in the *Church*; but yet they muſt needs ſay, if they underſtand themſelves, that old implicit doctrines, may become new Articles of Faith by virtue of the *Churches* definition. So little are they relieved by that ſilly diſtinction *of explicit and implicit delivery* of them, which Mr. *S.* for a great Novelty acquaints us with. For what is only *implicitly delivered*, is no Article of Faith at all: for that can be no Article of Faith, which

men are not bound to believe; now there are none will ſay that men are bound to believe under pain of Damnation if they do not the things which are only implicitly delivered; but this they ſay with great confidence of all things defined by the *Church*. And let now any intelligent perſon judge; whether thoſe who aſſert ſuch things, do not differ wide enough from thoſe who reſolve all into *Oral Tradition*, and make the obligation to Faith wholly dependent upon the conſtant Tradition of any doctrine from Age to Age ever ſince the *Apoſtles* times.

§ 11. But Mr. *S.* is yet farther diſpleaſed with me for ſaying, *that Pope and Councils challenge a power to make things* de fide *in one Age, which were not in another.* For 1. he ſays, *I ſpeak it in common, and prove it not.* 2. He adds, *That take them right, this is both perfectly innocent, and unavoidably neceſſary to a Church.* And is it not ſtrange he ſhould expect any particular proofs of ſo innocent and neceſſary a thing to the being of a *Church*? But he will tell me it is in his own ſenſe of *de fide*, which I have already ſhewn to ſignifie nothing to his purpoſe. Let him therefore ſpeak out whether he doth believe any ſuch thing as inherent infallibility in the definitions of *Pope* and *Councils*? if not, I am ſure at *Rome* they will never believe that Mr. *S.* agrees with them *as faithfull*; if he doth, whether doth not ſuch an infallible de-

finition

finition bind men by virtue of it to the belief of what is then defined? if it doth, then things may become as much *de fide* by it, as if they were delivered by *Christ* or his *Apoſtles*. For thereby is ſuppoſed an equal obligation to Faith, becauſe there is a propoſition equally infallible. But will he ſay, the *Pope* doth not challenge this? Why then is the contrary Doctrine cenſured and condemned at *Rome*? Why is the other ſo eagerly contended for, by the moſt zealous ſons of that *Church*, and that not as a *School-opinion*, but as the only certain *foundation* of *Faith*? Mr. *S.* is yet pleaſed to inform me farther, *that nothing will avail me but this, if a Pope and Council ſhould define a new thing, and declare they ground themſelves on new lights, as did their firſt Reformers in* England: *but I ſhall find*, he ſaith, *no ſuch Fopperies in Faith-definitions made by the Catholick Church.* Is this the man who made choice of reaſon for his weapon? could there be a greater Calumny caſt on our *Church*, than to ſay *her Reformers grounded themſelves on new Lights*? when our great charge againſt the *Church* of *Rome* is for introducing *Novelties*, and receding from pure and primitive Antiquity. Whether the charge be true or no, yet ſure it follows they did not declare *they ground themſelves on new Lights*, but expreſly the contrary. Well, *but Pope and Councils neither define new things, nor ground themſelves*

on them : but what means the man of reaſon ? that they make no new definitions : ſurely not ; for then what did they meet for ? and what mean their decrees ? but he intends, that they deliver no new Doctrine : but how muſt that be tried ? or hath Mr. *S.* gained the Opinion of Infallibility both from *Pope* and *Councils*, that we muſt believe his bare word ? but we not only ſay but prove that even their laſt *Council* hath defined many things, which never were delivered by *Chriſt* or his *Apoſtles*. And it is to no purpoſe whether they ſay *they ground themſelves on new Lights*, or pretend to an *infallible aſſiſtance* ; for it comes all to the ſame at laſt. For if the aſſiſtance be infallible, what matter is it whether the Doctrine hath been revealed or no ? for on this ſuppoſition it is impoſſible that *Pope* and *Council* ſhould miſcarry. Therefore if any *Church* be guilty of *Fopperies* in Faith-definitions, it muſt be that which you miſcall *the Catholick*, but is more truly known by the name of the *Roman Church*. There is yet one piece of Mr. *S*'s ſagacity to be taken notice of as to this particular, which is, *that I am at an end of my argument, becauſe I ſay the Opinion of the Pope and Councils Infallibility is the common Doctrine maintained : in which I confound the Church with the Schools, or ſome private Opinators, and then carp at thoſe mens Tenets.* And this is the force of all that Paragraph, He tells me, *I want not Wit*

to

to know that no ſober Catholick holds humane deductions the Rule of their Faith, Schoolmen definers of it, nor the Schools the Tribunal whence to propoſe it Authoritatively and Obligingly to the generality of the Faithfull. Neither doth Mr. *S.* want the wit to know that our preſent enquiry is concerning the ſenſe of their preſent Church about the Rule of Faith. Since then Mr. *S.* muſt confeſs it neceſſary to Faith to know what the certain Rule of it is; let me enquire farther, whether any particular perſon can know certainly what it is, unleſs he knows what the *Church* owns for her Rule of Faith; and whether that may be owned as the *Churches* Judgment, which is ſtifly oppoſed by the moſt intereſſed perſons in the *Roman Church*, and the moſt zealous contenders for it? Eſpecially when the *Pope* who is ſaid to be *Head* of the *Church*, condemns the Doctrine aſſerted, and that only by a ſmall number of ſuch who are as much oppoſed by themſelves, as by any of us. Is it then poſſible to know the *Churches* Judgment or not? if not, 'tis to no purpoſe to ſearch for a *Rule* of *Faith*: if it be, which way can we come to know it, either by moſt *Voices* or the ſenſe of the *Governours* of the *Church*; either of the ways, I dare put it to a fair tryal whether *Oral Tradition*, or the *Infallibility* of *Pope* and *Councils* be the Doctrine moſt owned in the *Church* of *Rome*? But Mr. *S.* ſtill tells us, *theſe are only private*

Opinators and Schoolmen who aſſert the contrary doctrine to his. But will not they much more ſay on the other ſide, that this way of *oral tradition* is a novel fancy of ſome few *half Catholicks* in *England*, and tends to ſubvert the *Roman Church*. But is the preſent *Pope* with Mr. *S. a private opinator*, or was the laſt a *mere Schoolman*? I am ſure what ever Mr. *S.* thinks of him, he thought not ſo of himſelf when he ſaid, *he was no Divine* in the controverſie of *Janſenius*. Doth the *Court* of *Rome* ſignifie no more with Mr. *S.* than a company of *ſcholaſtick Pedants* that know not what the ſenſe of the *Church* is, concerning the rule of faith? I meddle not with the *Schools* but with the authority of the *preſent Church*, and him whom Mr. *S.* owns for the *head* of it: and is it conſiſtent with his *headſhip* to condemn that doctrine which contains in it the onely certain *rule* of *faith*? Mr. *S.* may then ſee they were no ſuch impertinent *Topicks* which I inſiſted on, and as ſtout as Mr. *S.* ſeems to be, I am apt to believe he would not look on the cenſure of the *Inquiſition* as an impertinent *Topick*.

§ 12. But at laſt Mr. *S.* offers at ſomething whereby he would ſatisfie me of the ſenſe of the *Church*, as to this particular, and therefore asks, *whether I never heard of ſuch a thing as the Council of* Trent? I muſt ingenuouſly confeſs I have; and ſeen more a great deal of it, than I am ſatisfied with.

But

But what of that? *there*, he tells me, *I may find a clear ſolution of any doubt by the conſtant procedure of that moſt grave Synod in its definitions.* That is, I hope to find that oral tradition was acknowledged there as the onely *ſelf-evident* rule of faith. If I do this, I confeſs my ſelf ſatisfied in this enquiry. But how much to the contrary is there very obvious in the proceedings of it? For in the *4th Seſſion* the Decree is, *That Scripture and Tradition ſhould be embraced with equal piety and reverence*; and the reaſon is, *becauſe the doctrine of faith is contain'd partly in Scripture, partly in Tradition*; but what arts muſt Mr. *S.* uſe to infer from hence, that *oral tradition* in contradiſtinction to *Scripture* was looked on as the onely rule of faith? I cannot but ſay, that the ruling men of that *Council* were men wiſe enough in their *generation*; and they were too wiſe wholly to exclude *Scripture*; but becauſe they knew *that* of it ſelf could not ſerve their purpoſes, they therefore help it out with *Tradition*, and make both together the *complete rule of faith.* Where I pray in all the proceedings of that *Council* doth Mr. *S.* find them define any thing on the account of *oral tradition*? inſtead of which we find continual bandyings about the ſenſe of *Scripture* and *Fathers*, which might have been all ſpared, if they had been ſo wiſe as to conſider, they could

not but know the ſenſe of the *preſent Church*, nor that of the precedent, and ſo up to the time of *Chriſt*. But they were either ſo ignorant as not to light on this happy invention; or ſo wiſe and knowing as to deſpiſe it. It is true, they would not have their doctrines looked on as *novelties*, therefore they ſpeak much of *tradition* and the *ancient faith*; but that was not by what their *Parents* taught them, but what the *Fathers* of the *Church* delivered in their writings; for by theſe they judged of *traditions*, and not the *oral* way. And therefore I ſee little reaſon to believe, that this was either the ſenſe of the *Council* of *Trent*, or is the ſenſe of any number of *Roman Catholicks*, much leſs *of the whole Church, none excepted*, as Mr. *S.* in his confident way expreſſes it.

P. 212. *And if he will*, as he ſaith, *diſavow the maintaining any point, or affecting any way which is not aſſented to by all.* I hope to ſee Mr. *S.* retract this opinion, and either fall in with the *Court* of *Rome*, or return, as reaſon leads him, into the boſom of the *Church* of *England*. But there ſeems to be ſomewhat more in what follows, *viz. that though ſchoolmen queſtion the perſonal infallibility of the Pope, or of the Roman Clergy, nay of a General Council, yet all affirm the infallibility of tradition, or the living voice of the Church eſſential; and this*, he ſaith, *is held by all, held firmly*, and *that it is abſolutely*

ſolutely infallible. To this therefore I anſwer, either Mr. *S.* means that none do affirm that the *univerſal tradition* of the *Church eſſential* can err, or that the *Church* of *Rome*, being the *Church eſſential*, cannot err in her tradition: But which way ſo ever he takes it, I ſhall eaſily ſhew how far it is from proving that he deſigns it for. For if he take it in the firſt ſenſe, *viz.* that *all the faithfull* in *all ages* could not concur in an errour, then he may as well prove *Proteſtants* of his mind as *Papiſts*, for this is the foundation on which we believe the particular Books of *Scripture*. If this therefore proves any thing, it proves more than he intends, *viz.* that while we thus oppoſe each other, we do perfectly agree together; and truely ſo we do, as much as they do among themſelves. But if Mr. *S*'s meaning be, *that all of their Religion own the Roman Church to be the Church eſſential, and on that account, that it cannot err*, ſetting aſide the abſurdity of the opinion it ſelf,) I ſay from hence it doth not follow, that they make *oral tradition* the rule of *faith*, becauſe it is moſt evident, that the ground why they ſay their *Church* cannot err, is not on Mr. *S*'s *principles*, but on the ſuppoſition of an *infallible aſſiſtance*, which preſerves that *Church* from errour. So that this falls far ſhort of proving, that they are all agreed in this rule of faith; which is a thing ſo far from probability

bability, that he might, by the ſame argument prove, that *Scripture* is owned by them all to be the rule of faith. For I hope *it is held by all*, and *held firmly*, that the living voice of *God* in *Scripture*, as delivered to us, is *infallible*; and if ſo, then there is as much ground for this as the other. But if we enquire what it is men make a *rule* of *faith*, we muſt know not onely that they believe *tradition infallible*, but on what account they do ſo. For if tradition be believed *infallible* barely on the account of a promiſe of *infallibility* to the *preſent Church*, then the reſolution of faith is not into the *tradition*, but into that *infallible aſſiſtance*; and conſequently the rule of faith is not, what bare tradition delivers, but what that *Church*, which cannot err in judging tradition, doth propoſe to us. It is not therefore their being agreed in *general, that Tradition is infallible*, doth make them agree in the ſame *rule* of *faith*; but they muſt agree in the ground of that *infallibility*, *viz.* that it depends on this, *that no age could conſpire to deceive the next*. But all perſons who underſtand any thing of the *Roman Church*, know very well that the general reaſon why tradition is believed infallible, is, becauſe they firſt believe the *Church* to be *infallible*; whereas Mr. *S.* goes the contrary way, and makes the *infallibility* of the *Church*, to depend on the *infallibility* of *tradition*. And there-

therefore, for all that I can ſee, we muſt ſtill oppoſe *private Opinators* in this controverſie; the *Church* of *Rome*, not having declared her ſelf at all on M. *S*'s behalf, but the contrary, and the generality believing on the account of the preſent *Churches* infallibility. And it is ſtrange Mr. *S.* ſhould find no difference between mens reſolving faith into common ſenſe, and into the immediate aſſiſtance of the *Holy Ghoſt*. If this then *be the firſt principle of controverſie*, as Mr. *S.* pretends, we ſee how unlikely they are to agree about other matters, who are ſo much divided about the principle of reſolving them. And if this be the ground of faith, then moſt *Romaniſts* build on a wrong Foundation. But if the *infallibility of oral tradition* be the foundation on which *that formidable ſtructure is erecting*, which he ſpeaks of, wo then to the *Court* of *Rome*, for that is known to build on quite a different foundation. And *if this*, as he ſaith, *riſes apace, and has advanced many ſtories in a ſmall time*, it onely lets us know how faſt their diviſions grow, and that they are building ſo faſt one againſt another, that their *Church* will not ſtand between them. By this diſcourſe, Mr. *S.* pretends *to anſwer all thoſe If's which follow*; which are theſe, *In caſe the Church may determine things* de fide, *which were not before, whether the preſent Church doth then believe as the precedent* P. 213.

dent did or no? if it did, how comes any thing to be de fide *which was not before? if it did not, what aſſurance can I have that every age of the Church believes juſt as the precedent did, and no otherwiſe; When I ſee they profeſs the contrary? And if a thing may be* de fide *in one age, which was not in a foregoing, then a Church may deliver that as a matter of faith at one time, which was never accounted ſo before; by which means the preſent Church may oblige me to believe that as a matter of faith, which never was ſo in Chriſt's or the Apoſtles times, and ſo the infallibility on the account of tradition is deſtroyed.* To all which Mr. *S.* gives a very eaſie anſwer, *viz. that they do not hold any diſparate or unimplied points of faith; but ſuch as are involved and implied in the main point.* This is no more eaſily ſaid than underſtood; for if theſe be implied in the former, how can there come a new obligation to believe them? For to take his own inſtance, will any man in his ſenſes ſay, that he that believes *homo eſt animal rationale,* doth not believe *homo eſt animal*? and this he makes choice of as an example, *how one point of faith may be involved in another, ſo as to receive a diſtinct obligation to believe it.* I grant that *homo eſt animal* is involved in the other, but he that ſhall ſay, that after he hath aſſented to that propoſition, *homo eſt animal rationale,* he

he may be capable of a new obligation to believe the former, which is involved in this, it may be justly questioned whether such an one, as to himself, can truely say, *homo est animal rationale*, or no. But after such rare subtilties, he doth very well to tell me, *that I ought to consider what Logick tells us, that the conclusion is in the premisses, which reflexion* (in his court-like expression) he saith, *will much unblunder my thoughts.* But let the conclusion be as long as it will in the *premisses*, will any man in his wits say, that he that believes the *truth* of the *premisses*, is not hereby bound to believe the conclusion? and the more the one is involved in the other, the less is it possible to make the obligation to believe them distinct. And it is hard for me to believe, that this is a way *to unblunder my thoughts*, when I see what horrible confusion such expressions argue in his own. Let the *Church* then clear her thoughts never so much, yet all this cannot amount to a distinct obligation to believe those things which were involved before, but to a more explicit declaring them for the *Churches* peace and satisfaction. The onely conclusion then involved in these premisses, is, that if some things may be *de fide* in one age which were not in another, then the present age may believe otherwise than the precedent did. And if this doctrine be held in the *Church* P. 214.

of

of *Rome*, nothing can be more evident, than that Mr. *S's firſt principle of controverſie*, is far from being the doctrine of the *Roman Church*, which was the thing to be proved.

§ 13. My ſecond chief argument againſt this way of *oral tradition* was, *that it had not been owned in all ages of the Chriſtian Church*; to manifeſt which, I enquired into the reaſon of the obligation in any age of the *Church* to believe and practiſe juſt as the precedent did. Mr. *S.* rejoices in that confeſſion of mine, *that the onely thing to be proved in this caſe is, that every age of the Church, and all perſons in it, look'd on themſelves as obliged not to vary in any thing from the doctrine and practice of the precedent age.* And I there offer the choice of three ways to prove it, *reaſon*, *teſtimony*, or *tradition*; he tells me, *he excepts the way of reaſon*; yet quarrels with me for preſſing for a *demonſtrative medium* to prove it, when yet Mr. *S.* ſeldom ſpeaks under the rate of *demonſtrations*. But he thereby notes *the unconſonancy of my carriage*, Wherein I wonder? That I ſhould deſire them to perform this promiſe, *viz.* to give us *demonſtrations* for the grounds of faith? But ſaith withall, *he will yield me the honour of profeſſing I have no demonſtration but probability for the ground of mine, and he makes this ſerious proteſtation for himſelf, that he ſhould eſteem him-*

himſelf very diſhoneſt, did he aſſert and preſs on others any argument for the ground of his faith, which he judged not evident, that is demonſtrative. What is it theſe men mean, when they cry up their own way for *demonſtrative*, and ſay that we build our faith merely on *probabilities*? Do they ſay, that *Religion* is capable of ſtrict and rigorous *demonſtration*? If ſo, let them demonſtrate the *being* of *God* and *immortality* of the *ſoul*, with as much evidence, as *that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles.* And it is ſtrange, if they think *particular problems* in religion are more capable of *demonſtration* than thoſe *Theorems* on which they are built. But by all the enquiry I can make, all the difference between us is, that Mr. *S.* will have that called a *demonſtration*, which is ſcarce a *probability*; and we call that *ſufficient reaſon*, which any wiſe man may ſafely rely on in matters of *Religion.* In the mean time how much do we ſuffer by our modeſty, that becauſe we ſpeak not as big as Mr. *S.* does, we muſt be cenſured preſently to have nothing but *probabilities* for our faith? Are thoſe bare *probabilities* which leave no ſuſpicion of doubt behind them? And ſuch we freely aſſert the grounds of our Religion to do; *i. e.* I aſſert, that we have the higheſt actual certainty of the truth of our *Religion*, which the mind of any reaſonable man can deſire;

and

and if Mr. *S*'s *demonſtrations* can do any more than this, let him tell us what it is. For my part, I know nothing higher in the mind of man than a *certain aſſent*, and if I did not think there was the greateſt ground in *Religion* for that, I abhor diſſimulation ſo much, that I ſhould leave off perſuading men to embrace it. And if any men have made us ſhy of the word *demonſtration* and *infallibility*, they are ſuch men as Mr. *S.* have done it, who talk of theſe things, when their arguments fall beneath ſome of the remoteſt *probabilities* we inſiſt on. Nay, if there be any force in his *demonſtration*, as to matter of fact, it hath been uſed by us long before his Book ſaw the light. But we love to give the true names to things, and not to loſe our credit with all intelligent perſons, by playing *Mountebanks* in *Religion*, crying up thoſe things for *infallible cures*, which an ordinary capacity may diſcern the inſufficiency of. But was it any thing but juſtice and reaſon in me to expect and call for a *demonſtration* from them who talk of nothing under it? And therefore I ſaid, *that it was impoſſible to demonſtrate this way of oral tradition, unleſs it were proved impoſſible for men not to think themſelves obliged to believe and do all juſt as their predeceſſours did.* For where the contrary is not onely poſſible, but eaſily ſuppoſable, as that men

may

may believe thoſe things, as new articles of faith which are defined by *Pope* and *Council*, I wonder how Mr. *S.* will demonſtrate, that men muſt look on themſelves as obliged to believe juſt as their predeceſſours did? For I had thought demonſtrations had never place in contingent propoſitions; but it ſeems Mr. *S.* who tells me, *Logick will unblunder my thoughts*, intends to make a new one for me. And I aſſure you ſo he had need, before I ſhall ever call his arguments demonſtrations: and although he thinks himſelf *very honeſt* in calling them ſo, yet I ſhould think him much *wiſer* if he did not.

§ 14. But before I come to the particular debate of theſe things, I freely tell him, that I grant all he requeſts; I ſhall *take along with me the nature of the matter in hand, the doctrines and practices ſpoken of, the manner of delivering them, the neceſſary circumſtances which give weight to both*; yet for all theſe, I cannot look on his way as *demonſtrative*. And that both our meanings may be better underſtood, it is very neceſſary the Reader ſhould have a true account of the ſtate of the Queſtion between us. And if he will believe me, I never intended to diſpute with him or any one elſe, *whether men were bound to wear their clothes, or build houſes, or manage eſtates juſt as their predeceſſours did*; but whether every age is obliged to believe and practiſe juſt as the

P. 236.

P. 227.

precedent did, by virtue of mere *oral tradition*; for about that is all the controverſie between us. I do not deny, but a ſucceeding age may look on it ſelf as bound to believe what the precedent did; but whether that obligation doth ariſe purely from the delivery of that doctrine by the precedent in the way of *tradition*, is the thing in diſpute between us. For in caſe the ground of faith be wholly the written Word, conveyed from age to age, I deny not but an obligation to believe deſcends with the doctrine to every ſucceeding age. But that which Mr. *S.* is to prove is, *that abſtractly from Scripture every age is abſolutely bound to believe juſt as the precedent did*, without any enquiry whether that doctrine doth agree with *Scriptures* or no; but that he is therefore bound to believe all which is propoſed to him, becauſe it was the doctrine of the immediately preceding age. And this is that which I deny, and deſire Mr. *S.* to prove. For which he firſt gives us a large inſtance in hiſtorical matters, and then comes to the matters of *Chriſtian Faith*. His inſtance is, *in* Alexander's *conqueſt of* Aſia, *as to which*, he ſaith,

P. 218. *that the memory of it is freſh and lively, though ſome thouſand years ſince; and that the univerſal and ſtrong perſuaſion of this matter of fact was not cauſed by Books, as* Curtius *his Hiſtory, but by humane tradition; that the continuance of this perſuaſion was the notoriety of the fact to the then*

then livers, which obliged them to relate it to their poſterity, and that this teſtifying by the fore-fathers, was that which obliged poſterity to believe things, as true, becauſe there could be no imaginable motive why the whole world ſhould conſpire to deceive them, or be deceivable in their ſenſations; on which principle it paſſed to the next age, and ſo came down by way of tradition to our days; and the obligation to believe in every age depended upon this, that the ſenſes of the firſt could not be deceived; and having this ſecurity in every age, that no one would conſpire to deceive the next, it follows that no age could ſay a former age teſtified ſo, unleſs it did; ſo therefore, ſaith he, *it follows demonſtratively, that it was teſtified; and ſo the deſcendants in every age to the very end of the world have the ſame obligation to believe their immediate fore-fathers, ſaying it was teſtified by theirs, and ſo to the very firſt, who were witneſſes of his actions.* This is the ſubſtance of what he more largely diſcourſes in ſeveral Paragraphs; which when he hath done, he tells me, *he expects what I will reply to this diſcourſe.* P. 223. Not to fruſtrate therefore his expectation, and in order to the Readers ſatisfaction, we are to conſider, that in the preſent caſe there are two diſtinct queſtions to be reſolved: 1. How a *matter* of *fact* evident to the world comes to be conveyed to poſterity? 2. By what means a complete hiſtory of all paſſages

relating to it may be conveyed? As to the firſt, I grant that a *fact* ſo notorious as *Alexander*'s conqueſt of *Aſia* might have been preſerved by humane tradition, and conveyed in a certain way from one age to another. But if we enquire into that which is alone proper to our queſtion, *viz.* by what means we may judge what is *true* and *falſe* as to the *particulars* of that *conqueſt*, then I deny that bare *tradition* is to be relyed on in this caſe. For the certainty of conveyance of all particulars doth depend not upon the *bare veracity*, but the *capacity* and *skill* of *communicating* from one age to another. For which one would think we need no clearer evidence than the conſideration of the different account of former *times* in the ſeveral Nations of the world. For who can imagine, but the *barbarous Nations* were as unwilling to deceive their poſterity as any other? yet we ſee a vaſt difference in the *hiſtories* of former *ages* among them, and more civilized people. And I wiſh Mr. *S.* would rather have inſtanced in ſome hiſtory which had been preſerved merely by tradition, and not in ſuch a one, which, if any other, hath been moſt carefully recorded and propagated to poſterity. If Mr. *S.* would have undertaken to have told us, who they were that firſt peopled *America*, and from what place they came, by the *tradition* of the preſent inhabitants, and what famous actions

actions had been done there in former ages, we might have thought indeed, that *ſole tradition* had been a very ſafe way to convey matters of fact from one age to another. But ſince all Mr. *S*'s arguments will hold as well for the *Scythians* and *Americans*, and the moſt barbarous Nations, as the moſt civil and polite; what reaſon can Mr. *S.* give, why there is not among them as certain an account of former ages, as among the *Greeks* and *Romans*? Were not their *ſenſes*, who ſaw thoſe matters of fact, as uncapable of being *deceived* as others? Was not every age among them as unwilling to deceive their poſterity as elſewhere? Yet notwithſtanding the force of Mr. *S*'s demonſtration, we ſee for want of *letters* how groſly ignorant they are of what was done before them. And if this principle were true, why have we not as true an account of the *eldeſt* ages of the world, as of any other? Nay, why were *letters* invented, and writing ever uſed, if tradition had been found ſo infallible? But it is one thing ſuperficially to diſcourſe what is impoſſible ſhould be otherwiſe, and another to conſider what really hath been in the world. Doth not the conſtant experience of all times prove, that where any *hiſtory* hath not been timely recorded, it hath been ſoon corrupted by notorious falſities, or obſcured by fabulous reports? As we ſee among our ſelves, what difference there

is in point of certainty between the ſeveral ſtories of K. *Arthur* and *William* the *Conqueror*; what will Mr. *S.* ſay, that thoſe who lived in K. *Arthur*'s time could not know what he did, or that they conſpired to deceive their poſterity? but if tradition be ſo *infallible*, why have we not the ancient ſtory of *Britain* as exact as the modern? If Mr. *S.* will impute it to the *peoples ignorance, want of letters, frequent conqueſts* by other Nations, and *ſucceeding barbariſm*, he may eaſily find how many ways there are for *matters of fact* to be ſoon loſt or corrupted, when they have not been diligently preſerved by authentick records; and that without one age conſpiring to deceive another. But notwithſtanding Mr. *S*'s confidence, I cannot think it poſſible for Mr. *S.* to believe, that we ſhould have had as true an account of *Alexander's conqueſt of Aſia*, if *Arrian*, *Curtius*, or *Plutarch* had never writ his ſtory, as we have now. Yet this he muſt aſſert by virtue of his principle. And he that can believe that, I wonder he ſhould ſcruple believing the *Pope's infallibility*; for certainly no principle of the *Jeſuits* is more wild and abſurd than this is. Beſides, I admire how it came into Mr. *S*'s head to think, no errour could come into hiſtory *unleſs one age conſpired to deceive another*, when we find no age agreed in the preſent matters of *fact* which are done in it, as to the grounds and

and particulars of them; to give Mr. *S.* an inſtance home to his purpoſe, in the late *Council* of *Trent* we ſee already what different repreſentations there are made of it in ſo little a time as hath already paſſed ſince the ſitting of it. One, though he had all the advantages imaginable of knowing all proceedings in it, living at the ſame time, converſing with the perſons preſent at it, having the *memoires* and records of the *Secretaries* themſelves, yet his ſtory is ſince endeavoured to be blaſted by a great perſon of the *Roman Church*, as fictitious and partial. We ſee then it is at leaſt ſuppoſed that intereſt and prejudice may have a great hand in abuſing the world in matter of ſtory, though one age never agree to deceive another. And inſtead of being perſuaded by Mr. *S*'s demonſtrations, I am ſtill of the mind, that we have no ſufficient ſecurity of the truth of any ſtory, which was not written while thoſe perſons were in being who were able to contradict the errours of it. However I deny not, but ſome notorious matters of fact, ſuch as *Alexander's* bare *conqueſts* of *Aſia*, might by the viſible effects of it be preſerved both in *Aſia* and *Greece* for a long time. But if we come to enquire particularly, whether this or that was done by him in his conqueſt, which is alone pertinent to our purpoſe, we have no ſecurity at all from tradition, but onely P. 213.

from the moſt authentick records of that ſtory. And by this, I hope Mr. *S.* will have cauſe to thank me for *unblundering his thoughts* (his own civil expreſſions,) and ſhewing him how errours may come into a ſtory without one age conſpiring to deceive the next; and what a vaſt difference there is between preſerving a bare matter of fact, and all the particulars relating to it. And hereby he may eaſily ſee how far the obligation extends in believing the report of former ages. For there can be no obligation to believe any farther than there is evidence of truth in the matter we are obliged to. If then there be not onely a poſſibility, but a very great probability of miſtakes and errours in matters of fact, I pray what obligation doth there lye upon men abſolutely to believe what is delivered by the preceding age? But to put an iſſue to this controverſie, let Mr. *S.* examine himſelf, and try if he can name one ſtory that was never written, which was ever certainly propagated from one age to another by mere oral tradition; and if he cannot, he may thereby ſee how little real force his argument hath in the world. For all the force of tradition lies in an unqueſtionable conveyance of thoſe *Books* which contain in them the true reports of the actions of the times they were written in. But can Mr. *S.* think, that if the *Roman hiſtory* had never been written,

it

it had been poſſible for us to have known what was done under the *Kings* and *Conſuls* as now we do? Yet if his principle holds, this neceſſarily follows; for *thoſe of that Age could not but know them*, and *no Age ſince could conſpire to deceive the next*. And from hence, the moſt uſefull conſequence of all is, that Mr. *S.* might have writ a Hiſtory from the beginning of the world to this day, with a full relation of all *particulars*, if there had never been any *Book* written in the world before. And doth not Mr. *S.* deſerve immortal Credit for ſo rare an invention as this is, and all built on nothing ſhort of *demonſtrations*?

§ 15. But Mr. *S.* very prudently *foreſees*, *what it is I muſt be forced to recur to*, viz. *that being baffled with his former demonſtration, I have no other ſhift to betake my ſelf to, but to ſay the caſe is different between Hiſtories and Points of Faith*. And therefore to bring his buſineſs home, he applies it at large to the delivery of the *Chriſtian Faith*, which that he might do in more ample ſort, he very finely deſcants on the old *Verſe*, *Quis*, *quid*, *ubi*, *&c.* containing the circumſtances of humane Actions, and from every one of them derives Arguments for the *Infallibility* of *Oral Tradition*; which briefly and in plain *Engliſh* may be ſummed up thus; *Since the Authour of this Doctrine was the Son of God, the Doctrine it ſelf ſo excellent, and delivered* P. 224.

in

in ſo publick a manner, in the moſt convincing way, by Miracle and good Living, and for ſo good an end as to ſave mens Souls, and that by writing it in mens hearts, and teſtified to others; and all this at a time when men might judge of the Miracles and Motives for believing it; therefore ſince in all theſe reſpects it was incomparably beyond the ſtory of Alexander's *Conqueſts, it follows, that in a manner infinitely greater muſt the obligation be to believe Chriſt's Doctrine, than* Alexander's *or* William *the Conquerour's Victories, or any Hiſtory of the like nature whatſoever.* All which I freely grant, but cannot yet ſee how from thence it follows; that *Oral Tradition is the only Rule of Faith*, or the means whereby we are to judge what is the *Doctrine* of *Chriſt*, and what not. Thoſe Arguments I confeſs prove, that the *Chriſtians* of the firſt Age were highly concerned to enquire into the truth of theſe things, and that they had the greateſt reaſon imaginable to believe them; and that it is not poſſible to conceive that they ſhould not endeavour to propagate ſo excellent a Doctrine, and of ſo high concernment to the world. But the queſtion is, whether abſtractly from the *Books* written in the firſt Age of the *Chriſtian Church*, there is ſo much Infallibility in the *Oral Tradition* of every Age, that nothing could be embraced for Chriſt's Doctrine which was not; and conſequently, whether every Age were bound to believe abſolutely

abſolutely what was delivered it by the Precedent for the Doctrine of *Chriſt*? Mr. *S.* therefore puts himſelf to a needleſs task of proving that every Age was bound to believe the *Doctrine of Chriſt*, which I never queſtioned; but the diſpute is, whether every Age be bound on the account of *Oral Tradition* to believe what is delivered by the Precedent for *Chriſt's Doctrine*. But it is to be obſerved all along how carefully Mr. *S.* avoids mentioning the *written Books* of the *New Teſtament*; becauſe he knew all his game about Oral Tradition would be quite ſpoiled by a true ſtating the matter of Fact in the firſt Ages of the *Chriſtian Church*. I hope he will not be angry with me, for asking him that queſtion about the *Scripture*, which he asks me about the *Council* of *Trent*; *did he never hear of ſuch a thing as the Scripture? or is it ſo hard to find it?* But if he hath heard of it, I intreat him to reſolve me theſe *Queſtions*: 1. Whether he doth not believe, that the Books of the *New Teſtament* were written at ſuch a time, when the matters of Fact therein Recorded, were capable of being throughly examined? which he cannot deny upon his own principle; for Tradition being then infallible as to the *Doctrine* of *Chriſt*, the writers of theſe Books cannot be conceived to deliver it amiſs, unleſs they reſolved to contradict the preſent Tradition of the *Church*; which if they had done, thoſe Books could never

never have found any reception among *Chriſtians*. If Tradition then convey the Doctrine of Chriſt infallibly, theſe Books muſt convey it infallibly, becauſe they contain in them the infallible Tradition of the firſt Age of the *Chriſtian Church*; and were written at the time when many perſons living had been able to diſprove any thing contained therein repugnant to truth. And that theſe Books were written by thoſe perſons whoſe names they bear, I appeal to Mr. *S*'s own Rule, *Tradition*; for if that be infallible in any thing, it muſt be in this; and if one Age could conſpire to deceive another in a matter of ſuch concernment, what ſecurity can be had, that it may not do ſo in all other things? 2. Whether he believes, that thoſe whoſe intention was to write an account of the Life, Actions, and Doctrine of *Chriſt*, did leave any thing out of their Books which did relate to them as of concernment for us to believe? For upon Mr. *S*'s principles, any one may eaſily know what the Tradition of the *Church* is; and eſpecially ſuch certainly who were either preſent themſelves at the matters of Fact, or heard them from thoſe who were; and what ſatisfaction can any one deſire greater than this? But the queſtion is, whether this Teſtimony were not more ſafely depoſited in the *Church* to be conveyed by word of mouth, than it could be by being committed to writing by ſuch who were Eye and Ear

Ear witneſſes of the Actions and Doctrine of Chriſt? Upon which I advance ſome farther *Queries*. 3. If Oral Tradition were the more certain way, why was any thing written at all? It may be Mr. *S.* will tell us, *for moral inſtructions, and to give precepts of good life*; but then why may not theſe be as infallibly conveyed by Tradition as Doctrines of Faith? And why then were any matters of Fact and points of Faith inſerted in the Books of the *New Teſtament*? By which it certainly appears, that the intention of writing them was to preſerve them to poſterity. Let Mr. *S.* tell me whether it was conſiſtent with the wiſdom of men, much leſs with the wiſdom of an *infinite Being* to imploy men to do that which might be far better done another way, and when it is done can give no ſatisfaction to the minds of men? 4. Whether thoſe things which are capable of being underſtood when they are ſpoken, ceaſe to be ſo when they are written? For Mr. *S.* ſeems to underſtand thoſe terms of a *living voice*, and *dead letters* in a very ſtrict and rigorous manner; as though the ſenſe were only *quick* when ſpoken, and became buried in *dead letters*. But Mr. *S.* ſeems with the ſagacious *Indian* to admire how it is poſſible for *dead letters* and *unſens'd characters* to expreſs mens meanings as well as words. I cannot enter into Mr. *S*'s apprehenſion, how 24 Letters by their various diſpoſition can expreſs

preſs matters of Faith? And yet to increaſe the wonder, he writes about matters of Faith, while he is proving that matters of Faith cannot be conveyed by writing. So that Mr. *S*'s own writing is the beſt demonſtration againſt himſelf; and he confutes his own *Sophiſtry* with his fingers, as *Diogenes* did *Zeno*'s by his motion. For doth Mr. *S.* hope to perſwade men, that Tradition is a Rule of Faith by his Book or not? If not, to what purpoſe doth he write? If he doth, then it is to be hoped ſome matters of Faith may be intelligibly conveyed by writing; eſpecially if Mr. *S.* doth it. But by no means we are to believe that ever the *Spirit* of *God* can do it. For whatever is written by men aſſiſted by that, is according to him but a heap of *dead Letters*, and *inſignificant Characters*; when Mr. *S.* the mean while is full of *ſenſe* and *demonſtration*. Happy man that can thus out-doe infinite Wiſdom, and write far beyond either *Prophets* or *Apoſtles*. But if he will condeſcend ſo far as to allow that to inſpired Perſons which he confidently believes of himſelf, *viz.* that he can write a Book full of *ſenſe*, and that any ordinary Capacity may apprehend the deſign of it, our Controverſie is at an end; for then matters of Faith may be intelligibly and certainly conveyed to poſterity by the Books of *Scripture*; and if ſo, there will be no need of any recourſe to *Oral Tradition*. 5. If the Books of *Scripture*

ture did not certainly and intelligibly convey all matters of Faith, what made them be received with ſo much Veneration in the firſt Ages of the *Chriſtian Church*? which were beſt able to judge of the truth of the matters contained in them, and the uſefulneſs of the Books themſelves. And therein we ſtill find, that Appeals were made to them, that they thought themſelves concerned to vindicate them againſt all Objections of Heathens and others; and the Reſolution of Faith was made into them, and not Tradition, as I have already manifeſted, and muſt not repeat.

6. Whether it be in the leaſt credible, ſince the Books of *Scripture* were ſuppoſed to contain the Doctrines of Faith, that every Age of the Church ſhould look on it ſelf as obliged abſolutely to believe the Doctrine of the Precedent by virtue of an Oral Tradition? For ſince they reſolved their Faith into the written Books, how is it poſſible they ſhould believe on the account of an Oral Tradition? Although then the *Apoſtles* did deliver the Doctrine of Chriſt to all their Diſciples; yet ſince the Records of it were embraced in the Church, men judged of the truth or falſhood of Doctrines, by the conveniency or repugnancy of them to what was contained in thoſe Books. By which we underſtand, that the obligation to believe what was taught by the precedent Age, did not ariſe from the Oral Tradition of it, but

Part. 1. chap. 9.

but by the ſatisfaction of the preſent Age, that the Doctrine delivered by it was the ſame with that contained in *Scripture.*

P. 229, &c. § 16. It is time now to return to Mr. *S.* who proceeds ſtill to manifeſt *this obligation in poſterity to believe what was delivered as matter of Faith, by the precedent Age of the Church*; but the force of all is the ſame ſtill; *viz. that otherwiſe one Age muſt conſpire to deceive the next.* But the inconſequence of that, I have fully ſhewed already, unleſs he demonſtrates it impoſſible for Errors to come in any other way: For if we reduce the ſubſtance of what he ſaith to a Syllogiſtical form, it comes to this; Where there is no poſſibility of Error, there is an abſolute obligation to Faith; but there is no poſſibility of Error in the Tradition of any Age of the *Church: ergo* in every Age there is an abſolute obligation to believe the Tradition of the preſent *Church.* The *minor* he thus proves; If no Age of the *Church* can be ignorant of what the precedent taught, or conſpire to deceive the next, then there is no poſſibility of Error coming into the Tradition of the *Church* in any Age; but the Antecedent is true, and therefore the conſequent. Now, who ſees not that the force of all this lies not in proving the *minor propoſition*, or that no Age could conſpire to deceive another? but the conſequence, *viz.* that no Error can come into a *Church*, but by a general miſtake, in

in one whole Age, or the general impoſture of it which we utterly deny; and have ſhewed him already the falſeneſs of it from his own conceſſions. And I might more largely ſhew it from thoſe Doctrines or Opinions which they themſelves acknowledge to have come into their Church without any ſuch general miſtake or impoſture, as the *Doctrines* of *Papal Infallibility*, and the common belief of *Purgatory*. The very ſame way that Mr. *White* and Mr. *S.* will ſhew us how theſe came in, we will ſhew him how many others came in as Erroneous and Scandalous as thoſe are. For whether *they* account theſe matters of Faith or no, it is certain many among them do, and that the far greateſt number, who aſſert and believe them to be the Doctrine of their *Church* too. If therefore theſe might come in without one Age miſtaking or deceiving the next, why might not all thoſe come in the ſame way which we charge upon them as the Errors of their *Church*? And in the ſame manner that Corrupt Doctrines come in, may Corrupt Practices too, ſince *theſe*, as he ſaith, *ſpring from the other*. He might therefore have ſaved himſelf the trouble of finding *out how an acute Wit, or great Scholar would diſcover the weakneſs of this way*. For without pretending to be either of theſe, I have found out another way of Attacking it, than Mr. *S.* looked for; *viz.* from his

P. 23.

own Principles and Conceſſions; ſhewing how Errors might come into a Church, without a total Deception or Conſpiracy in any one Age. Which if it be true, he cannot bind me to believe what ever he tells me the preſent Church delivers, unleſs he can prove that this never came into the Church as a Speculation or private Opinion, and from thence by degrees hath come to be accounted a point of Faith. Therefore his way of proof is now quite altered, and he cannot ſay we are bound to believe whatever the preſent Church delivers; for that which he calls the preſent Church, may have admitted Speculations and private Opinions into Doctrines of Faith; but he muſt firſt prove ſuch Doctrines delivered by Chriſt or his Apoſtles, and that from his time down to our Age they have been received by the whole Church for matters of Faith; and when he hath done this, as to any of the points in controverſie between us, I will promiſe him to be his *Proſelyte*. But he ought ſtill to remember, that he is not to prove it impoſſible for one whole Age to conſpire to deceive the next; but that ſuppoſing that it is impoſſible for any Errors to come into the Tradition of the Church. Let us now ſee what Mr. *S.* objects againſt thoſe words I then uſed againſt the demonſtrating this way; *It is hard to conceive what reaſon ſhould inforce it, but ſuch as proves the impoſſi-*

impoſſibility of the contrary; and they have underſtandings of another Mould from others, who can conceive it impoſſible men ſhould not think themſelves obliged to believe and do all juſt as their Predeceſſors. And whatever Mr. *S.* ſays to the contrary, I cannot yet ſee, P. 234. but that therein I argued *from the very nature and conſtitution of the thing.* For that which I looked for, was a *demonſtration*, which I ſuppoſed could not be unleſs the impoſſibility of the contrary were demonſtrated. But if it be poſſible for Men, *Chriſtians*, nay *Romaniſts* to believe on other accounts than Tradition of the precedent Age, I pray what demonſtration can there be, that men muſt think themſelves obliged to believe and do all juſt as their Predeceſſors did? Surely if Mr. *S*'s Fancy had not been very extravagant, he could never have thought here of *mens being obliged to cut their Beards, or wear ſuch Garters and Hat-bands as their Fore-fathers did.* For do not I mention *believing firſt, and then doing*? by which it were eaſie to apprehend, that I meant matters of Faith, and ſuch Practices as flow from them. Neither was there any ſuch *Crafty and Sophiſtical Dealing* as he charges me with; for I am content his Doctrine be P. 235. taken in his own terms; and I have now given a larger and fuller account why I am far from being convinced by the way he hath

uſed for reſolving Faith. Paſſing by therefore his challenge, which I accept of, as long as he holds to the *weapon* of *Reaſon* and *Civility*, I come to conſider his laſt enquiry, *why*
P. 236. *I ſhould come to doubt of ſuch an obligation in Poſterity, to believe their Anceſtors in matters of Faith*; and he judiciouſly reſolves it into *a ſtrange diſtortion of Humane Nature*,
P. 237. but ſuch as it ſeems, is the proper effect of the *Proteſtants Temper, which is*, ſaith he, *to chuſe every one his Faith by his private Judgement, or Wit, working upon diſputable words.* Which as far as we own it, is not to believe what we ſee no ground for; and if this be ſuch a *diſtortion of Humane Nature*, I envy not Mr. *S*'s Uprightneſs and Perfection. If he means that we build our Faith on our private Judgments, in oppoſition to *Scripture*, or the *Univerſal Tradition* of the *Church* in all Ages, let him prove it evidently in one particular, and I engage for my ſelf and all true *Proteſtants*, we will renounce the belief of it. If he hath any thing farther to object againſt the grounds of our Religion, he knows where to Attack me; let him undertake the whole, or elſe acknowledge it a moſt unreaſonable thing thus to charge Falſities upon us, and then ſay we have nothing elſe to ſay for our ſelves. We pretend not to chuſe our Faith, but heartily embrace whatever appears to have been delivered by *Chriſt*

or

or his *Apoſtles*; but we know the *Church* of *Rome* too well to believe all which ſhe would impoſe upon us, and are loth to have her chuſe our Religion for us, ſince we know ſhe hath choſen ſo ill for her ſelf. But if Mr. *S.* will not believe me in ſaying thus, what reaſon have I to believe him in ſaying otherwiſe? Such general charges then ſignifie nothing, but every one muſt judge according to the reaſon on both ſides.

§ 17. I now come to the laſt part of my task; which is to ſhew, *that this way is repugnant to common Senſe and Experience, and that the* Church *of* Rome *hath apparently altered from what was the belief of former Ages.* To which purpoſe my words are, *It is to no purpoſe to prove impoſſibility of motion when I ſee men move; no more is it to prove that no Age of the Church could vary from the preceding, when we can evidently prove that they have done it. And therefore this Argument is intended only to catch eaſie Minds that care not for a ſearch into the Hiſtory of the ſeveral Ages of the Church, but had rather ſit down with a ſuperficial Subtilty, than ſpend time in farther enquiries.* But *two things* Mr. *S.* tells me *are required e'er I can ſee that their Faith varies from the former; firſt to ſee what their Church holds now, and then to ſee what the former Church held before; and he kindly tells me, if he ſees any thing, I ſee* P. 238.

neither well. It ſeems I want Mr. *S's Spectacles* of Oral Tradition to ſee with; but as yet I have no cauſe to complain of the want of them, but I ſee much better without them than with them. He tells me, *I cannot ſee what their preſent Church holds, and therefore I cannot aſſure any what was held before; becauſe, if I renounce Tradition, I take away all means of knowing. The reaſon why I cannot candidly ſee* (as he phraſes it) *what their Church holds now, is, becauſe I cannot diſtinguiſh between Faith and its Explication, ſome Schoolmen and the Church.* By which it ſeems it is impoſſible for me to know what their Church holds concerning *Invocation of Saints, Worſhip of Images, Communion in one kind*; for thoſe are the points I there mention, wherein it is evident, that the *Church* of *Rome* hath receded from the Doctrine and Practice of the Primitive Church. Or are theſe only the Opinions and Practices of ſome *Schoolmen* among them, and not the Doctrine and Practice of their *Church*? But that we might come to ſome fuller ſtate of theſe Controverſies, I wiſh Mr. *S.* would ſettle ſome ſure way whereby we might know diſtinctly what are the Doctrines and Practices of their Church. If the *Council* of *Trent* and *Roman Catechiſm* be ſaid to be the Rule of *Doctrine*, I deſire no other; ſo that thoſe may be interpreted by Practices univerſally allowed among

mong them. As when that *Council* only defined, that *due Honour be given to Saints*; the general Practice of that *Church* may tell us what they mean by that *due Honour*; and if that be not fair, I know not what is. But I ſee all the ſhift Mr. *S.* hath, is, when he is pinched, to ſay *theſe are the Opinions of Scholmen and private Speculators, and not the Doctrine of their Church.* And if ſuch ſhifts as theſe are muſt ſerve the turn, I ſhould wonder if ever he be to ſeek for an anſwer. But the ſhorteſt anſwer of all would be, that none but thoſe of their Church can know what ſhe holds; and therefore it is to no purpoſe for *Proteſtants* to write againſt her; or it may be, that none but Mr. *S.* and one or two more can tell; for many among them ſay, thoſe are the Doctrines of their *Church* which they deny to be. So that except Mr. *White* and Mr. *S.* and ſome very few *demonſtrators* more, all the reſt are *Schoolmen, private Opinators,* and not to be relied on. *But* P. 236.
I cannot ſee what their Church held formerly neither. No wonder at all of that; for if I cannot ſee an Object ſo near me as the preſent *Church*, how can it be expected I ſhould ſee one ſo much farther off as the Doctrine of former Ages? And his reaſon is ſo ſtrong, as may well perſwade me out of one, at leaſt, of my Five Senſes. *For*, ſaith he, *if I queſtion Tradition, I queſtion whether there be*

any Doctrine delivered, and ſo any Fathers. And is not this argued like a Demonſtrator? Firſt he ſuppoſes there never was any way uſed in the world but Oral Tradition, and then ſtrongly infers, if I deny that, I can know nothing. But I can yet hardly perſwade my ſelf that the *Fathers* only ſate in Chimney-Corners teaching their Children by word of mouth, and charging them to be ſure to do ſo to theirs; but as they loved preſerving the Doctrine of Faith, they ſhould have a great care never to write down a word of it. But why, I wonder, ſhould Mr. *S.* think, that if I do not allow of Oral Tradition, I muſt needs queſtion whether there were any *Fathers*? I had thought I might have known there had been *Fathers* by their *Children*? I mean the *Books* they left behind them. But if all Mr. *S.* pleads for be only this, that no *Books* can be certainly conveyed without Tradition, he diſpute's without an Adverſary; but as I never oppoſed this, ſo I am ſure it doth him little ſervice. It is then from the Books of the *Fathers* that I find what the ſenſe of the *Church* of their Age was, and from thence I have ſhewed how vaſtly different the Opinions and Practices of the *Roman Church* are from thoſe of the *Primitive*. Although then I may not think my ſelf obliged to believe all that the preſent *Church* delivers for matter of

of Faith; yet I hope I may find what the Opinions and Practice of the former *Church* were by the Records that are left of it. And the reaſon why I cannot think any one obliged to believe what every Age of the *Church* delivers, is, becauſe I think no man obliged to believe Contradictions; and I ſee the Opinions and Practices of ſeveral Ages apparently contrary to each other.

§ 18. Well, but I call this way a *Superficial Subtilty*; and ſo I think it ſtill; ſo little have Mr. *S*'s demonſtrations wrought upon me. *But*, ſaith he, *is that which is wholly built on the nature of things Superficial*? No; but that which pretends to be ſo built, may. And of that nature I have ſhewed this way to be, and not the former. But that I may not think him *Superficial* as well as his way, he puts a profound Queſtion to me, *What do I think Controverſie is*? and that he may the better let me know what it is, he anſwers himſelf. *I deal plainly with you*, ſaith he, *you may take it to be an Art of Talking, and I think you do ſo, though you will not profeſs it; but I take it to be a Noble Science.* But to let him ſee that I will deal as plainly with him, as he doth with me, I will *profeſs* it, that I not only think *Controverſie* as uſually managed, but ſome mens way of demonſtrating (Mr. *S.* may eaſily know whom I mean) to be a mere *Art of Talking*, and nothing elſe. But *he takes it to be a Noble Science*;

Science; yes doubtleſs, if Mr. *S.* manage it, and he be the judge of it himſelf. His meaning I ſuppoſe is, by his following words,
P. 240. *that he goes upon certain Principles, and we do not.* We have already ſeen how certain his Principles have been, and I ſhould be ſomewhat aſhamed of my *Religion* if I had no better. But what our *Rule* of *Faith* is, hath been amply diſcourſed already by you, and that in Mr. *S's clearing Method*, that nothing is left for me to do, but to touch at what remains, and concludes this anſwer. I had the better to illuſtrate the weakneſs of that Argument from *Oral Tradition*, brought an inſtance in that caſe parallel, *viz.* that if one Ages delivering to another would prove that the Faith of Chriſt was in every Age unalterable, becauſe no Age did teſtifie any ſuch alteration to be in it; by the ſame Argument the world might be proved eternal, becauſe no Age did ever teſtifie to another, that the world was ever otherwiſe than it is. So that if Oral Tradition were only to be relied on, there could be no evidence given of the worlds being ever otherwiſe than it is, and conſequently the world muſt be believed to have been always what we ſee it is. This, as far as I can apprehend, is a clear and diſtinct Ratiocination, and purpoſely deſigned to prove that we muſt admit of other Rules to judge of Alterations in the *Church* by, beſides Oral Tradition. But Mr. *S.* (in

S. (in his own expreſſion) *ſtrangely roving from the Mark* I aimed at, profeſſes *there is not a tittle in it parallel to his* medium, *nay, that he never ſaw in his Life more Abſurdities couched in fewer words.* But I muſt take all patiently from a man *who ſtill perches on the Specifical Nature of things, and never flags below the Sphere of Science.* Yet by his good leave, he either apprehends not, or wilfully miſtakes my meaning; for my Argument doth not proceed upon the belief of the worlds Eternity, which, in his anſwer, he runs wholly upon as far as *Eighthly and Laſtly*, but upon the evidence of Oral Tradition as to no diſcernable alteration in any Age of it. For the Queſtion between us, is, whether in matters of alteration in the Faith or Practice of the Church, we are bound to relie only on the Teſtimony of Oral Tradition; ſo that if no Age can be inſtanced in wherein any Alteration was made, and this delivered by that Age, then we are bound to believe there hath been no Alteration ſince *Chriſt* and the *Apoſtles* times; now I ſay, if this hold good, I will prove the World Eternal by the ſame Argument; taking this for our Principle, that we are bound to relie only on Oral Tradition in the Caſe, Originally derived from the matter of Fact ſeen by thoſe of the firſt Age; for that which never was otherwiſe than it is, is Eternal; but we cannot know by Oral Tradition that the World

P. 241.

P. 242.

ever

ever was otherwiſe than it is; for no Age of the World can be inſtanced in, wherein we have any Teſtimony of any Alteration that was in it. Either then we muſt believe that the World ever was what it is, *i. e.* Eternal; or elſe we muſt ſay, that we are not to relie barely on Oral Tradition in this Caſe, but we muſt judge whether the World were made or no, by other *Mediums* of Scripture and Reaſon. And this was all which I aimed at, *viz.* to ſhew that where there is no evidence from Oral Tradition; yet if there be *Scripture* and *Reaſon*, there is ſufficient ground for our Faith to ſtand upon. And ſo I apply it to the preſent Caſe; though we could not prove barely from the *Tradition* of any one Age, that there had been any Alteration in the Faith or Practice of the *Church*; yet if I can prove that there hath been ſuch from *Scripture* and *Reaſon*, this is ſufficient for me to believe it. And now I dare appeal to the indifferent Reader, whether this be ſo *full of Abſurdities*, or it be ſuch a *rambling Chi-*
P. 243. *merical Argument* (as he calls it,) *no two pieces of which hang together with themſelves, or any thing elſe.* Which being expreſſions of as great Modeſty as Science, I am content Mr. *S.* ſhould bear away the honour of them and his demonſtrations together.

§ 19. The laſt thing he quarrels with me for, is, that I ſay, *if we can evidently prove, that*

that there have been Alterations in the Church, then it is to no purpoſe to prove that impoſſible which we ſee actually done. And this appears not only becauſe the Scripture ſuppoſes a Degeneracy in the Chriſtian Church, which could never be, if every Age of the Church did infallibly Believe and Practiſe as the Precedent up to Chriſt's Time did; but becauſe we can produce clear evidence that ſome things are delivered by the preſent Church, which muſt be brought in by ſome Age ſince the time of Chriſt; for which I refer the Reader to what I had ſaid about Communion in one kind, Invocation of Saints, and Worſhip of Images: In all which, I ſay, *I had proved evidently that they were not in uſe in ſome Ages of the Chriſtian Church; and it is as evident that theſe are delivered by the preſent Church, and therefore this Principle muſt needs be falſe.* In anſwer to this, Mr. *S.* wiſhes, *I would tell him firſt what Evidence means, whether a ſtrong Fancy, or a Demonſtration?* I mean that which is enough to perſwade a wiſe man, who judges according to the cleareſt reaſon, which I am ſure is more than ever his Demonſtrations will do. But it is a pleaſant ſpectacle to ſee how Mr. *S.* lays about him, at my ſaying that the *Scripture* ſuppoſes a Degeneracy in the Chriſtian Church. *Incomparably argued!* ſaith he, *why, ſee we not the place? Does it evidently ſpeak of Faith, or Manners; the Univerſal Church, or particu-*

particular Perſons? but be it in Faith, be it Univerſal, does it ſuppoſe this Degeneracy already paſt, which is only proper to your purpoſe, or yet to come? That is, does it ſay there muſt be a total Apoſtaſie in Faith before the Year 1664? *Alas, he had forgot this.* Moſt incomparably anſwered! For if the Degeneracy be in 1665. or any Years after, what becomes of Mr. *S*'s Demonſtration then, that no Errors could come into the Church? but it ſeems his Demonſtration holds but till 1664. and I eaſily believe another Year will never believe the truth of it. But if ſuch a thing as a Degeneracy be poſſible, how then ſtands the Infallibility of Tradition, when there can be no Degeneracy without falling from the Doctrine and Practices of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*? But that ſuch a Degeneracy hath already been in that which calls it ſelf the *Catholick Church*, and that both in Faith and Manners, I ſhall refer Mr. *S.* to the Learned Author of the late *Idea of Antichriſtianiſm* and *Synopſis Prophetica*, where he may find enough to perſwade him that his Demonſtration was far from holding ſo long as 1664. And now I leave the Reader to judge whether the foregoing Evidences againſt the Infallibility of *Oral Tradition*, or Mr. *S*'s Demonſtrations have the greater force of Reaſon in them. And if he will not *ſtoop* ſo far from the *height* of his *Perch*, as to take notice of what I have elſewhere ſaid, I am reſolved

reſolved to let him ſee I am not at all concerned about it: I begin to underſtand him ſo well by this *Appendix*, that I can give my ſelf a reaſonable account why he thought it not fit to meddle with any other part of my Book. But if Mr. *S.* be reſolved not to anſwer any of the Teſtimonies I there produce, unleſs *I ſingle them out, and print them at the end of this Anſwer,* (*i. e.* remove them from that evidence which attends them in the *Series* of the Diſcourſe) I can only ſay, he is the moſt imperious Anſwerer I have met with, who is reſolved never to deal with an Adverſary, but on his own unreaſonable terms. Thus heartily wiſhing Mr. *S*'s Science as great as his Opinion of it, and a good effect of our endeavours to promote the one, by removing the other, I am P. 244.

Sir,

Your affectionate friend

and ſervant,

London, June 28th. 1665.

Edward Stillingfleet.

FINIS.

Poſtſcript.

SIR,

SInce the diſpatch of the former Papers, I have met with another Treatiſe, wherein I find my ſelf concerned, written by the Authour of *Fiat Lux*, the Title whereof is *Diaphanta:* I am afraid the Title affrights you; for I aſſure you it is the moſt formidable thing in his whole Book. But the man is a very modeſt man, and hugely different from Mr. *S*'s humour; for he is ſo far from offering to demonſtrate the grounds of faith; that all he pretends to in the title of his Book, is *to excuſe Catholick Religion againſt the oppoſition of ſeveral Adverſaries.* What fault I pray hath the *Catholick Religion* committed, that it muſt now come to

be *excuſed* inſtead of being *defended*? But when I look into that part which concerns my ſelf, I preſently underſtand the meaning of it, which is not *to excuſe Catholick Religion*, but *themſelves* for not being able to *defend* it. For he very ingeniouſly tells us,

P. 210. *that faith is firm and conſtant, though all his talk for it be miſerably weak: i. e,* he is ſure they have an excellent Religion, though he knows not what to ſay for it; and their faith is a very good faith, but it hath not yet had the good fortune to be under-

P. 209. ſtood by them. For he acknowledges, that *as often as they diſpute, they are beyond the buſineſs*, (ſo may any one believe, who reads their late Books,) which is in effect to ſay, there is no way left of diſputing any longer with adverſaries about their faith; onely they muſt believe it ſtoutly themſelves; but it is to no purpoſe to offer to defend it. Nay, it doth their faith a great deal of miſchief; *for*, ſaith he, *in reading controverſies, we ſee not ſo much the nature of the faith, as the wit of him who propoſes or defends it.* From whence we may eaſily gather what unſpeakable miſchief they do their cauſe by writing for it. By which expreſſions, we may gueſs at what a low ebb the defence of their faith is among them: for the way now taken to defend it, is by diſowning the defenders of it, and by ſaying that they onely vent their own opinions; and though we confute them

them never ſo much, yet their faith holds good ſtill. Was ever a good cauſe driven to ſuch miſerable ſhifts as theſe are, eſpecially among thoſe who pretend to wit and learning? One, he ſaith, *T. C.* vents a private opinion of his own, and it is not a pin matter whether it ſtand or fall; another, he ſaith the ſame of *I. S.* a third of *J. V. C.* and yet for all this, their religion is very firm and ſure, and they are all at perfect agreement about it. Is this the *victory over me*, Mr. *S.* mentions to be ſo eaſie a thing? I ſee that by the ſame figure Mr. *S.* calls his way of arguing demonſtration, running out of the field ſhall be accounted conquering. For I never ſaw any perſon do it more openly than this Authour does. For he plainly confeſſes, *that his Catholick Gentleman went quite beſides his buſineſs, that he built upon indefenſible principles, that his theological ratiocination was indeed pretty but too weak to hold.* And are not we hugely too blame, if we do not cry up ſuch mighty Conquerours as theſe are? Truly, Sir, I expect the very ſame anſwer ſhould be returned to your Book; that Mr. *S*'s argument *is a pretty theological ratiocination; and that your anſwer is not unwitty; but though that way will not hold, another will.* Thus, when they are beaten off *Infallibility*, they run to *Tradition*: and when they are again beaten off *Tradition*, then back again to *Infallibility*. So that the ſhort of all their anſwers

ſwers is, though ſuch a one cannot defend our faith, yet I can; though I cannot, yet the faith is firm and conſtant ſtill. I wonder what their *Superiours* think of this way of proceeding among them; we ſhould imagine, if they be ſo weak as they ſay themſelves, they had much better keep them from appearing abroad, and expoſing their cauſe ſo ridiculouſly to contempt. But it may be, they think their *faith* is the better as well as their *devotion*, for their *ignorance*: and that it would be a mighty diſparagement to their cauſe, for ſuch ſilly people to be able to defend it. It is enough for them to admire it themſelves, and to ſay as their common people uſe to do, though they cannot defend it, yet there are ſome that can. And although it may be no particular perſon can do it, yet their cauſe is able to defend it ſelf. But for all that I can ſee, by ſuch kind of anſwers, the intention of them is, to intreat us not to triumph over the weakneſs of their preſent Writers, but to wait till the *Cauſe* it ſelf thinks fit to write. And when it doth ſo, they may expect a farther anſwer; but it were a great piece of cruelty for us to haſten their ruine, who fall ſo faſt before us by each others Pens.

FINIS.